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H I D D E N L I N K S ;

OR,

THE SCHOOLFELLOWS.

A TALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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HIDDEN LINKS;

OR,

THE SCHOOLFELLOWS.

CHAPTER I.

"Oh, haste to shed the sacred balm!
My shattered nerves new string,
And for my guest, serenely calm,
The nymph Indifference bring!"
GREVILLE.

"Altho' my realms, with wonders fraught,
In remedies abound,
No grain of cold Indifference
Was ever yet allied to sense
In all my fairy round."
COUNTESS OF C——S. ANSWER.

"No letters for me, are there, Aunt?" said Montague, as the post was delivered to the old lady one morning.

"None, Harry."

“That is well, though I am afraid my reprieve will not last much longer, and I shall have to wish you good-bye in a hurry one of these days.”

Harry was, in fact, lengthening the Christmas holidays into a long vacation, and he was every day expecting a letter from his father to desire him to return to London. Mr. Montague had not objected to his son's prolonging his stay in Leamington beyond the holidays, for when his aunt, with whom Harry was an especial favourite, begged that he might remain a few weeks, the knowledge that the old lady possessed a very comfortable income, derived from the three per cents., and entirely at her own disposal, proved a strong inducement with Mr. Montague, the father of a large family, to grant the request.

So Montague had very naturally and cheerfully made up his mind to absent himself from his legal pursuits until he should receive a hint to resume them; and the time passed pleasantly and, perhaps, rather too quickly.

Courtenay and he were, of course, constant companions. Fred often lent Harry one of his horses, for he did not care to hunt more than two or three days a week, and they not unfrequently joined the Miss De Lormes, who constantly rode out with their brother.

Both the sisters had acquired perfect seats in the saddle, and their natural elegance and grace, joined to their easy management of their horses, caused many a remark of admiration and compliment as they passed through the town; and no wonder, for as the poet sings:

"'Tis good to see a steed of noble race
By woman ruled with skill and mastery;
The smitten air gives freshness to her face,
And animation glistens in her eye:
Her very breathing quickens into grace,
And by a fault enchants. Few things outvie
A lovely woman on a fiery horse,
The mingled form of gentleness and force."

Few days passed without Courtenay and Montague meeting the De Lormes.

Somehow, and probably by a very ordinary process—for love is seldom the result of anything wonderful, except in books,—a feeling of

strong attachment had sprung up between Harry Montague and Mary De Lorme. She, with the artless simplicity of a guileless heart, merely felt that Montague was one, in every way, worthy of her love, and, therefore, she thought not to check her free and natural preference. But Montague was too honourable to forget that in winning her affections, he was dimming the bright prospect of her future. Was it just? Was it kind to involve her in his labours, struggles, and denials? Ought he not, while he deemed that her heart was still free, to tear away the bonds which were already around his, and for her sake withdraw from the danger while he had yet time and strength?

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The sisters were one day prolonging their exercise in the Holly Walk, Mrs. De Lorme had gone home, leaving her daughters in charge of their brother, Montague and Courtenay met and joined them. Somehow, and it seemed very naturally, Montague and Mary De Lorme walked

apart from the others; they could not all walk in line, of course.

"I was intending to call upon you to-day," said Harry; "I am going to leave to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" repeated Mary startled. "Have you had your orders to return to town?"

"No: but I must not remain here longer; I wonder if we shall ever have another walk together?"

"And why not?" she asked, looking up to Montague, with the most artless and open expression.

Montague did not answer Mary's question, but said, musingly,

"I have enjoyed my stay here so much—too much, perhaps, for I am afraid I shall take but badly to my dreary rooms and dull heavy studies; I almost wish I had never come to Leamington."

"That is scarcely a civil speech, Mr. Montague," said Mary, smiling. "Is it fair to ask why it is made?"

"Have you never heard that past joys increase present sorrows?"

"I have also heard of the pleasures of memory."

"Yes, a poet sang them as another, did the pleasures of hope. Poets are proverbially dreamers."

"And the song says that 'dreams always go by contraries,'—is that what you would insinuate?"

"Frankly, Miss De Lorme, I have, as I said, enjoyed my stay here more than I could have expected, and no part of it so much as that which has been passed during our rides and walks together. My thoughts will continue to be where my enjoyment has been so great!"

There was a silence for a few moments.

"I believe," resumed Harry, "that the wisest thing I can do is to forget the many pleasant hours I have spent."

"Remember the proverb," said Mary, smiling, "'*en essayant d'oublier, on se rapelle.*' But why should you forget these hours?"

"I fear," replied Harry, seriously, "that mine must be a life of toil. My profession is

already overstocked, labour is scarce or monopolised, wages are bad; the labourers out of work."

"What, is that a picture of your profession?"

"Yes, and a true one. I will pass over all the struggles, disappointments, and cares of the younger son and briefless barrister, and end his luckless tale.

'Nobody misses him, nobody sighs,
Nobody grieves when the bachelor dies.'

"Well, for my part," said Mary, a little off her guard, and with more warmth than she intended, "I cannot think why people make such a fuss about eldest sons. I am afraid you would put it down to flattery if I were to say what I thought of them."

"Will you risk it? I should like to hear your defence of my poor despised brethren in misfortune. At any rate, they might be proud of their advocate."

"I think not," answered Mary, "but I am quite sure that these paragons of perfection are never half as clever or half as pleasant as their

younger brothers. They, to be sure, have no need of any exertion, they float with the stream, so they loll idly—gracefully of course they would think—on their oars. Are they not often intolerable bores, with an immense amount of vanity to boot?”

“Really, Miss De Lorme, you are very severe. You must not proclaim your opinions; they are treasonable. Well, now for the other side.”

“I must be careful, I suppose,” said Mary, laughing, “but I think I may at least assert that, as the younger son does not find everything at his hand, he knows that he has to rely for success on himself alone; he does his best in all he undertakes, in the drawing room, perhaps, as well as in more important situations. And does he not often,” added she, with animation, “achieve honour and distinction, and win the prize his elder brother envies? I know which I would rather be then.”

“You give me courage, Miss De Lorme; but years, years of expectance at least, of ‘hope deferred,’ pass very slowly.”

"Would the prize that any one, at any time, may win, be worth possessing?"

"But to wait so long, through years of disappointment, doubt,—"

"But not despair."

"No, not with your encouragement, at least, though I fear I may require it when we meet again. There may be many changes, however, before that time."

"What changes?"

"Oh!" replied Harry with a laugh, but it was anything but a hearty joyous laugh, "I suppose, some day, when my clerk brings me in the *Times*, I shall see a paragraph between the births and deaths, which will prove that you have changed your opinion about eldest sons."

"When you do," said Mary, rather gravely, "I will give you leave to write me a very scolding letter, and remind me of what I have said to-day."

"Had we not better go in, Mary," said her sister, "the sun has gone down long ago, and it is getting very cold."

"Do you think so?" replied Mary, "I am quite warm: but we will go home if you wish to do so."

The party left the Holly Walk, and proceeded homewards.

"You will come in this evening, Mr. Montague," said Mary, "and wish us good-bye?"

Harry looked into Mary's face as he answered her, for there was something different from usual, something a little tremulous in her voice. A tell-tale tear had come unbidden into her eyes: Harry saw it. What a thrill went through his heart, though he said nothing; but, when he left his fair companion at the door of Mr. De Lorme's house, the pressure of his hand on hers was stronger than usual, and conveyed more than he would have spoken.

Montague called on the De Lorme's that evening. Fred was with him. Of course Sir Frederick Courtenay, of Lowick, would be welcome. A baronet, with some twelve or fifteen thousand a-year, needed no other credentials in the eyes of judicious mammas.

Harry had sometimes found his voice serve him in lieu of a better passport, and his talent for music had, no doubt, procured him many a pleasant hour passed with the De Lormes.

As usual, he was asked to sing. No wonder he felt sad as the time for his departure drew near. Some of the melodies harmonized exactly with his feelings, and he threw into the words and music more than usual pathos and impressiveness.

It was with very doubtful pleasure, with very mixed emotions that Mary listened to him, and her heart gave an involuntary response to the last words he sang—"Oh! still remember me."

Montague bade them all farewell, Mary the last.

How glad she was when she could retire from the drawing-room without attracting notice!

Harry went back to London, and set to work with better heart and purpose as he thought of the words which Mary De Lorme had spoken in the Holly Walk.

He was soon after called to the bar.

CHAPTER II.

Lady Wealthy,—Believe me sister, I had rather see you married to age, avarice, or a fool, than to Valere.

MRS. CENTLIVER.

For mercy's sake
Press me no more, I have no power to love him.

COLERIDGE.

Genevra from the nuptial altar went,
The vows to which her lips had sworn assent,
Rung on her brain still with a jarring din.

SHELLEY.

THERE was no need for Sir Frederick Courtenay to practise the self-denial that Harry Montague, the poor younger son, deemed it his duty to submit to, when he resolved that the pleasant hours he had spent during his Christmas vacation should be succeeded by days of toil, application, and patience.

Sir Frederick had a good stud of hunters, but he was rather "training off" the sport he was really very fond of; and, when the run happened to be over early, he would seldom wait for a second, or care to follow "an afternoon fox;" but, on those days, he might more than once have been seen escorting some ladies, at an hour too early for a keen sportsman to have left the hounds.

The winter season was passing by.

There were about this time some rather mysterious conjugal consultations between Mr. and Mrs. De Lorme, and some very serious conversations between the latter and her eldest daughter. After one of them, Julia retired to her own apartment for a long time, and, when she left it, her eyes were very red. After that day she appeared, at times, with an air of dejection, listlessness, and indifference, and, occasionally, in a state of wild excitement very unnatural to her.

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"What! back from Ireland, Dermod," said

Courtenay, one day; "you certainly never give one notice of your movements."

"I was tired of the country; and, as the governor was all right again, I thought I would return here before the season was quite over."

"I did not know your father had been ill. But I have some news to tell you, Dermot. You must congratulate me."

"What about?"

"Guess: I'll engage you will not be far wrong."

"I don't know what to guess. Has Chamois won the Shakinoff steeple-chase?"

"Pshaw. I have won, indeed, but a very different prize to a race. I am going to be married, Dermot. I have won the hand of as fine a girl as—"

"You are enthusiastic. And her heart, of course."

"Can you guess who she is? No, I must have the pleasure of letting you know. She is Julia De Lorme."

"Julia De Lorme!" exclaimed Dermot, his very lips turning livid: "Julia D —— Oh! of

course, I congratulate you. But excuse me—I cannot stay—I have an engagement.” And Dermot turned away with the words Julia De Lorme still on his pale lips.

He had left Courtenay abruptly and hurriedly, but his pace increased, and, in a state of bewilderment, he ran rather than walked to the Hotel.

He locked the door of his room, and paced about it in unwonted agitation. His usual staid and collected manner had quite forsaken him, and betrayed his emotion and excitement.

“Julia De Lorme!” he exclaimed aloud—and he clenched and shook his hands. But he shall repent of this. Courtenay marry Julia De Lorme! Step in between me and her, the only girl I ever cared for, the only prize I ever saw worth winning. Did he not see that I loved her? Ah! he has made good use of my absence: how honorable of you, Sir Frederick Courtenay. Fool that I have been to let these weeks slip by and come back now, just in time to wish my rival joy. Does she love him? Bah! She was distant, even cold with me, but whilst I

was here did she ever give Sir Frederick Courtenay one word of encouragement, one look to make him dare to breathe a thought of love to her. Oh! if I had stayed, this would not, should not, have happened. Fool, fool! to expose myself to this and find myself duped—ay, doubly duped—refused by one, over-reached by another.”

In his rage, Dermot flung down a packet of letters on the table. One lies open; it is very short; it contains only these lines:

“Kreaghmore House.

“Sir,—My niece has begged me to answer the letter she had the honor of receiving from you yesterday; and, in reply, to say, that, without reference to considerations relative to yourself, she would find it impossible to enter a family whilst she retains the remembrance of the treatment which one of its members is known to have received from its head.

“I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

“JAMES WALLER.

“Dermot O'Neill, Esq.,

“Iveragh Castle.”

What! had Dermod gone over to Ireland, and, at the instigation of his mother, proposed, with sordid views, to the very girl whom he had made the subject of his jests to his brother. Had his addresses been rejected on account of the treatment of that brother, which he had indirectly caused! Ah, Dermod! did you never think that injuries will rebound sometimes against those who have flung them on others? And how brooked your proud father your rejection because he had but cast off a self-willed son? And how bore he the blow dealt to his proud parental rights by that young girl? Well might you hasten back to England—Iveragh would not now be a pleasant abode.

Dermod's passionate surmise was right. Julia De Lorme's heart had not been won with her hand, but her parents had persuaded her to accept Sir Frederick Courtenay's proposal. Her proud, cold heart had never known what it was to love, although wilfulness and the opposition of a wayward spirit had deceived her into a belief that, of all her acquaintances, she preferred

Dermot O'Neill. But with him, even, she had rarely relaxed her usual distant deportment; and O'Neill, knowing full well that he was not a favourite with Mr. and Mrs. De Lorme, seldom threw off the impassive appearance under which his cunning masked his advances to their daughter. It was overdone; his very artfulness overreached itself, and thus left Courtenay unsuspecting that, in seeking to gain the hand of Julia De Lorme, he was supplanting his friend, and doing that from which his honourable and chivalrous character would have indignantly revolted.

Mr. and Mrs. De Lorme deemed Sir Frederick a most desirable son-in-law, and with strong persuasion they had sought to overcome the only objection that could be raised against so excellent a marriage—that her daughter felt no real affection for her suitor. When her opposition yielded, Julia's reflections merely took the form she had once expressed in reference to Lizzy Lovegrove's rejection of Sir Benjamin Nugget.

In this disposition Julia De Lorme had

accepted for her husband, Sir Frederick Courtenay.

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"Oh, what a beautiful bracelet, Julia!" exclaimed her sister, one morning, as she unpacked a box, just arrived by the post.

"Yes, it is very pretty," said Julia.

"What splendid diamonds!" resumed Mary; "Sir Frederick has certainly shewn his taste in this present at least. I cannot imagine why you did not like the last."

"This is very handsome, no doubt."

"Why, Julia, you seem no more pleased than if Madame Canezou had given you a yard of lace. Look how all the scales move and glisten—how perfectly it imitates a real snake!"

"I hope it is not ominous," said Julia.

"How! What can you mean?"

"I was only thinking of the old saying about a snake in the grass. Shut it up."

The tale has been told a thousand times; the reality has been enacted tens of thousands, and will be as often again, how hands have been

joined before God's altar, when the hearts that should have kept them closed and clasped for ever had no part nor power in their union—why then, need I delay upon the events that preceded Julia De Lorme's marriage?

As the day approached, all the unevenness of spirits which Julia had manifested for some time after her engagement, disappeared. She fortified herself with a proud stoicism, which prevented all external emotion and agitation.

A number of beautiful and costly dresses were ranged round a spacious room, and many elegant and some magnificent presents shone upon the tables. It was a trousseau and corbeille worthy the beauty of the bride, and the wealth and position of the bridegroom.

There was no one in the room but the two sisters.

While Mary was re-organizing some part of the display which she fancied had not been arranged with Mrs. Pinstick's usual judgment, Julia left her, and stood opposite the magnificent dress she was to wear the next morning. She suddenly

burst into tears; and Mary, looking round, saw her with her handkerchief to her eyes, sobbing bitterly. In a moment, Mary had her arms round her sister, and, kissing her passionately, "Tell me, my sister!" she exclaimed: "oh! tell me, Julia darling, what has pained you?"

"Oh! Mary, Mary, you know not how very, very wretched I am. Oh! how I wish to-morrow would never come!"

It was the first burst of her real feelings that Julia had ever permitted to break forth before her sister, who, though she might have suspected had shrunk from the mere thought that Courtenay was not really loved by his betrothed."

"But, Julia darling, it is not yet too late—Do not marry Sir Frederick if your marriage is to make you unhappy; speak to papa—let me speak; and, even now it need not be."

"No, no, Mary. It must be now: I can bear it."

"Oh! no, dearest, do not say that; anything is better than an unhappy marriage. Sir Frederick himself would not wish it; do speak to

papa, and we will be happy together again, and forget all this, and not leave each other; dearest, dearest Julia, do let me speak," and the beautiful girl looked up through her tears into the agitated face of her sister, and more than words of love and entreaty came from her moistened eyes.

Julia gazed on her for a moment, tenderly, and, stooping, kissed her affectionately.

"I am better now, Mary dear. It was only a moment's weakness, a moment's foolishness. I forbid you, Mary, to speak a word. They all say that Sir Frederick is amiable, agreeable, clever, rich. Oh! yes, it is an excellent match!" and she laughed with a sarcastic, hysterical laugh, while the tears still stood in her eyes; "an excellent match; and to-morrow will soon be over."

The morrow came, and with it a troop of joyous, happy girls to assist at the sacrifice; and the victim appeared, as of old, adorned; and love, and faith, and constancy were plighted; and no mocking fiend was heard to laugh; and

Sir Frederick Courtenay bore away in triumph his beautiful bride; and her parents saw and rejoiced that they had made "a good match" for their daughter.

* * * *

Sir Frederick Courtenay's return to Lowick, with his bride, was celebrated with much festivity. The dependents vied with each other in their welcomes. Triumphal arches of evergreens spanned the road. The tenants donned their best attire, and the farmers' hacks that morning were groomed with very unusual care ere they were mounted to bear their riders to meet their landlord, in cavalcade, at the farthest boundary of his private drive; and the cottagers and villagers disengaged the horses from the carriage, and, fastening long ropes to it, yoked themselves to it, a stalwart and willing team; and from the high steeple that bounded the view far beyond the long avenue, and from the old tower, beneath which slept Sir Frederick's ancestors, rang out a joyous peal; and casks of good, strong, wholesome ale were broached; and

on the wide, oval ring, in front of the old mansion, the young men and maidens joined in the merry dance.

Many an eye had peeped into the carriage to catch a glimpse of "her ladyship," and loud and hearty were the shouts that greeted her when she appeared at the hall door. Many were the commendations passed upon her noble figure and handsome face, and heartfelt and warm was the response when the old steward rose up among them all, and, while his voice faltered, and the tears stood in his eyes, as he recalled the day when his late master brought his bride to Lowick, he expressed the hope that Sir Frederick and Lady Courtenay might long live happily among them, and his belief that from that day might be dated for them all a new era, and the ties between landlord and tenant be more closely united.

Though books, and music, and drawing, and languages were all subjects of interest and em-

ployment, Mary De Lorme found Marlinton very dull, for she missed her sister sadly.

But the London season soon arrived; that conventional season which to many is far more familiar than any of the four into which the year has been—for vulgar rustics—divided; and the De Lormes forsook the peaceful, beautiful, healthful country for the noisy, crowded, excited metropolis.

It might be supposed that mothers would err in their anxiety to keep their daughters beside them, and would be too jealous of their children's society and affections to part with them at the first opportunity. Oh! no. Their anxiety is quite the opposite: it makes them give the dear creatures "every advantage," every chance of forming an early and "desirable" marriage; and lauded and envied is the mother who has "got her daughters off her hands," while they are not yet beyond their teens. For this they are trotted out on promenades and parades, blanched by nightly vigils, and made to dare consumption in his strongholds of hot rooms and draughty

passages, till the indefatigable parent cries "Eureka," and, with hands trembling with the joy and exultation of her heart, she binds the orange wreath on the brow of the victim of maternal ambition and worldliness.

This object influenced both Mrs. De Lorme and Mrs. Dobison, but it would be doing an injustice to the former to say that the same feelings and motives actuated them both. Mrs. De Lorme not unreasonably deemed her daughters—even though their dowers would be small—entitled to mate with the highest and proudest of the land; Mrs. Dobison was indulging a vulgar ambition to attain for hers a social position, to which money alone gave them any claim.

There was one circumstance which had often given Mrs. De Lorme some uneasiness. Courtenay and Montague were, during their stay in Leamington, constant companions. Now Mrs. De Lorme was very glad to see the Baronet avail himself of every opportunity of being in the society of her daughters, but then she would have been better pleased if this had taken place without the

presence of the younger son. It was quite impossible for her to avoid leaving her girls occasionally (it happened oftener than she thought) to the guidance of their own hearts, to the tender mercies of the mischevious boy-archer, who might be lurking by the side of the poor younger son as well as that of the rich Baronet, and to the protection of their brother, who was far too good-natured to treat them as he would not have wished to be treated himself, or, as he would have expressed it, to "spoil sport."

But when the cause of the mother's fears was removed, when Montague had left Leamington; and when the Baronet had penned the grateful letter of proposal—the prize of her manœuvres, then Mrs. De Lorme deemed the danger past, and the risk to have been as judiciously dared as it had been fortunately escaped.

Mary De Lorme was one of the brightest stars of the London season. She was amply compensated for the dullness of Marlinton, and moved in a perpetual round of gaiety and amusement. The Courtenays had a house in town, and Julia

was delighted to undertake the *chaperonage* of her pretty sister when Mrs. De Lorme pleaded fatigue.

But the season passed and the orange-blossoms of white kid, leather, and cotton bloomed not yet in the glass cases of the flower shops for Mary De Lorme.

CHAPTER III.

Refuse a lord ! a saucy lady this,
I scarce can credit it.

SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

Actæa.—A man of note and consequence,
And suitor for thy hand.

Parthenia.—But my heart was silent,
And so—I wait until it wills to speak.

Actæa.—Thou foolish child,
Thy heart must speak. Straight drive that from thy mind !
* * * * * *

No second wooer may come like Polidori,
So rich—so honourable.

FREDERICK HALM.

WINTER was come, and Mr. De Lorme's delicate health had induced him to leave Marlinton again, and return with his family to Leamington. The season was mild, and the streets were as often as ever gaily sprinkled with the hunting

costumes of men eager to risk "the murders of a five-bar-gate."

"Hallo! Ravensclint," said a gentleman in scarlet, one afternoon, slowly riding up the parade upon a horse with that jaded, subdued appearance which is symptomatic of a hard run; "what became of you? I missed you before we came to Whitnash brook."

"Yaas, I dare say you did," replied Lord Ravensclint; "I pulled up; my mare got blown in the heavy ground."

"Blown! and with your weight! She must be in very bad condition. Well, you've missed the best thing we have had this season. After crossing the brook—it was a bumper, and Craven stopped short at it, and Pounder, and Finny the fishmonger, both got in—we went over Whitnash meadows at a killing pace, then the fox seemed to point for——"

But I beg my fair readers' pardon, and, imitating Lord Ravensclint, will pull up early in the run; nor, like some garrulous Nimrods, force upon them the details of what, to non partakers

of the sport, is, in general, a very uninteresting subject.

Perhaps Lord Ravensclint's mare was really blown—perhaps he did not fancy the chance of a cold bath in the brook—perhaps there were stronger attractions in Leamington than the best run of the season possessed—such at all events was the excuse he made for coming home early ; and his lordship had been philandering about for a long time before he encountered his sporting acquaintance.

“What is the matter with you, Ravensclint?” said Tom Hardman, one day, as they left one of the billiard rooms together ; “I never saw you play so badly. To be beaten by young Papan-spune, a fellow you can give ten points to. You completely threw away that last game. I lost——”

“Plague on the game,” exclaimed his lordship ; “if you have lost your money, I've lost mine too. You should not have backed me.”

“Why, I thought Papan-spune had no chance with you.”

“Well,” said Ravensclint, “it can’t be helped. I don’t know that you could have played better, if you felt as I feel.”

“Why, what’s the matter—what’s in the wind now?” asked Hardman, looking at his companion. “You’re not drunk—you’ve not got delirium tremens coming on, or ague, or——you’re not in love, Ravensclint, eh?”

Hardman remarked a flush rise on his lordship’s pale face.

“Hallo, George,” he continued, “is that your game?”

“And where’s the harm if it is?”

“I didn’t say there was any,” replied Tom, “did I? Only tell me, please, next time, before you play at billiards, not after you have lost, and I won’t lay seven to four on you; that’s all.”

But that was not all that was passing in Tom Hardman’s mind. He bethought him that after his lordship had once committed matrimony, he should have to resign the reins he now held to other hands, and that it might be difficult for him to find any one who would go so quietly in harness as his lordship.

“Well, George,” he resumed, after a pause, “I hope the fit will not last long. It seems pretty sharp, though. But who is the Dulcinea who has so bothered your eyes and your hand that you cannot make a stroke at billiards—to say nothing of your heart? Miss Dobison, my lord?”

“Nonsense, Tom.”

“Who then?”

“Well, I don’t mind telling you, Tom ; but I don’t want to be the talk of all the fellers at the club and billiard-rooms.”

“Of course not; you may depend upon me, and I’ll do my best to get you well through the business, too, old fellow,” added Hardman, with more meaning than appeared to his lordship’s understanding.

“Do you remember those two girls we saw riding together, one day last year, when I was so doocedly seedy,” said Ravensclint.

“Was there only one day on which you were seedy last year?”

“They rode so dooced well, don’t you remember?”

“If you won’t tell me the fair lady’s name at once, tell me what sort of horses they rode. I am more likely to remember them than the riders.”

“You are so stupid, Tom—the Miss De Lormes, there now; and—mine——”

“Mine, Ravensclint! what do you mean by mine? You’ve not proposed?”

“I have, though.”

“And she’s accepted you?” said Tom, with ineffable disgust, and the conviction that (to borrow a simile from the days of coaching) he had only a stage or two more to drive.

“No, I’ve not had an answer yet.”

There is still a hope, thought Tom, but it seemed a forlorn one, for he was strongly impressed with the belief that an Earldom in expectancy was a bait too tempting to be refused.

“And when did you make up your mind to sell your hunters, and burn your betting-book?”

inquired Hardman, with a strong infusion of vexation and sarcasm in his tone.

“Why should I do that, Tom?”

“I hope you will have no occasion to do so,” answered Hardman; “but matrimony is an expensive amusement. My lady will expect a good sum for her pin-money; there will be carriages and horses too, and powdered flunkeys, and diamonds, and opera boxes, and a hundred other trifles of the same kind to pay for. We have not heard that your governor’s gout has made any approach to the stomach, I think. The complaint is wholesome in moderation, elsewhere.”

“Hang me if ever I thought of all this,” said his Lordship.

“But perhaps your lady-love is as rich as she is beautiful, and amiable, and accomplished, and so forth? An heiress, perhaps? She’s the younger sister, though; Sir Frederick Courtenay married the elder, I think. And I remember seeing an officer constantly with them last Christmas, a brother, I suppose, on leave. Did Sir Frederick get much with the elder sister?”

“ ’Pon my word, I really don’t know.”

“ Depend upon it, Ravensclint, she has got a maiden aunt, or an uncle, in the East Indies, or a godmother, who will leave her, or give her, a lot of money, a Kohinoor or two besides; you can easily change them for paste and keep the flunkies and opera boxes on the difference which the jeweller will allow you for the diamonds. It’s done every day, and will help you on; and, as a last resource, there are always those friends in need, the Jews, they’ll not expect more than fifty or sixty per cent., and they’ll set you up for life in walking sticks and nutmegs.”

“ I really don’t know what fortune Miss De Lorme has. I didn’t think of that, Tom, when I _____ ”

“ Well done, Ravensclint. Love, nothing but love. People generally find out, though, that love is mixed up with poverty, as coffee and chicory used to be, or sugar plums and white lead. The child thinks it is all sugar, but it makes him horribly sick.”

“ It’s rather too late to tell me all this now,

Tom," said his Lordship, with a crest-fallen look. "Why could you not put a feller in mind of these things before. You must have seen that I ——"

"That you were falling in love—catching the disease? Not I. I know nothing of the symptoms. I've had no experience in such matters. Besides, where was I to have seen you acting this new character of a lover. I'm neither an eldest son nor an adept at small talk, so I don't get asked to balls and parties. No, George, I didn't think you were so soft."

"Well, the govenor must come down handsome."

A long whistle, comprising two notes, was Hardman's only answer. It was sufficiently expressive, however, and rightly interpreted by his companion, and that acute young nobleman replied,

"If he can't or won't, that's an end of the matter."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Hardman.

"I wish I had the answer," exclaimed Ravensclint.

“Suppose we go home,” suggested Hardman, “and see if it has been left.”

The friends accordingly proceeded towards their hotel, neither of them feeling in a comfortable state of mind; for Hardman's remarks had made his very manageable Lordship begin to think that he had done a foolish thing; and his Mentor experienced a good deal of irritation; in the first place, because he had not been consulted as to this important step; and in the second, because there appeared an unwelcome prospect of the termination of their intimacy.

Hardman's disquietude betrayed itself by his stepping out at a pace which his companion was quite unable to maintain, and his lordship hung back like an unwilling dog coupled to one stronger and more eager.

“Come, Tom,” said he, at length, “there's no need of going at this pace: you needn't be in such a dooced hurry.”

“Really, Ravensclint, I don't think that you are a very ardent lover. If I were in your place (I thank my stars I'm not), and thought my fate

was lying hid in an envelope on my table, I'd run like a racehorse, fly like a carrier pigeon—bah! you're not half a lover."

Hardman slackened his speed, however, to meet his lordship's capabilities. Whilst the two are moving, now more slowly towards the hotel, I will narrate a conversation which took place an hour or two previously in Mrs. De Lorme's drawing room.

Mary was finishing a sketch near one of the windows.

Enter (as the play says) Mrs. De Lorme, with a letter in her hand and a smile on her countenance. She came across the room and sat down beside her daughter.

"Mary," she began, "your papa received this letter a short time since, and, as it concerns you, I have brought it for you to read before Mr. De Lorme answers it."

As Mary drew the note from its envelope, she looked, for an instant, at the stamp of the large coronet with which it had been sealed; then, as she read the contents, and saw, at the close, the

single name of "Ravensclint," her face flushed deeply.

"Mamma," said Mary, looking up confused and red, but trying to speak quietly, "you must beg papa to decline this offer."

"What do you mean?" said Mrs. De Lorme, her countenance losing its smiling and rather triumphant expression; "decline Lord Ravensclint's proposals?"

"Yes, mamma, if you please."

"What fancy is this, Mary; at least, I may expect to know the reason for such a request. What is your objection to Lord Ravensclint?"

"Indeed I have none in particular; I know so little of his lordship that I should be sorry to say anything against him. He is a mere acquaintance."

"Nonsense, girl, you forget that Lord Ravensclint was in Leamington last winter; you were introduced to him then. You met him several times in town, and you have seen him frequently since our return to this place—a mere acquaintance, indeed!"

"But, mamma, I may still consider Lord Ravensclint only as an acquaintance."

"Does this mean, Mary, that no one is to marry who is not violently in love."

"No, mamma, but I am quite sure I ought not to marry a person whom I do not either love or esteem. You know how it would grieve me to displease either you or papa, but, indeed, I cannot marry Lord Ravensclint."

"You have got some foolish notion in your head, I suspect; or perhaps there is some one else for whom you fancy you entertain a preference."

Mary rose from her chair, and, going up to Mrs. De Lorme, put her arms round her mother's neck, and kissed her; then she hid her face upon her mother's breast.

"Tell me, Mary dear," said Mrs. De Lorme, in a milder and more affectionate tone; "I am sure your papa and I are only anxious to promote your happiness," and she raised the beautiful girl's head and kissed her brow.

Mary's face was suffused with blushes, which deepened as she replied,

"Mamma, mamma, I fear that you will be very angry, but I feel that I cannot love Lord Ravensclint."

"Tell me, my child," said her mother affectionately, "who has run away with that little heart of yours."

"Oh! mamma, will you be very angry with me if I tell you that—I mean Mr. Montague," and the poor girl burst into tears, and hid her face again, as if she had done wrong; and then she looked up tearfully and timidly, for her mother did not say a word.

"Now, my dear Mary," at length Mrs. De Lorme began, very seriously but quietly, "this is very foolish of you; this preference you tell me of is really absurd. Mr. Henry Montague is but a younger brother; as yet he has made little or no way in his profession; he has no present fortune; his expectations cannot be great—how can you think of him in preference to Viscount Ravensclint."

Poor Mary was silent, but her tears fell quickly.

"And pray, Mary," resumed Mrs. De Lorme, "has Mr. Henry Montague ever made you a proposal."

"No, mamma; but," continued the artless girl, "I am sure he is as much attached to me as I am to him. You know we have seen a great deal of each other. We have sometimes met at Julia's house in town, often last year in Leamington, and long before that; and papa always liked him and said he was very clever and sure to succeed in his profession. Oh! I am sure I cannot like any one else. Do not be angry, mamma, but pray ask papa to write to Lord Ravensclint to decline his proposal."

"But Mary, Mr. Montague never has proposed to you, and very probably never will do so. Yet you reject an excellent offer on account of a mere fancy. It is too ridiculous."

"Oh! pray, pray, mamma!" cried poor Mary, looking imploringly, almost wildly, into her mother's face, "do not, I beseech you. Oh! if

you love me, do not oblige me to marry Lord Ravensclint. I am young, I may be very foolish, but I cannot forget what I know I must forget if I were to marry him."

"Well, child," said Mrs. De Lorme, rather frightened at Mary's vehemence, "all I can say is that your papa will not directly accept Lord Ravensclint's offer; that is all that I will promise. And I must beg of you, Mary, to get rid of the ridiculous partiality which you have mentioned as soon as possible: a foolish, silly fancy, indeed, which you yourself will be ashamed of some day. Julia was far more sensible."

With these words, Mrs. De Lorme left the room to convey to her husband the unpleasant announcement of Mary's absurd infatuation.

Return we now to the two friends, Lord Ravensclint and Tom Hardman.

"Here we are at last," said the latter, as they entered the hotel. "Any letters for Lord Ravensclint?"

"I will see, Sir," said the waiter.

He presently returned with one, and handed

it to his lordship. The young nobleman's face became even paler.

"By Jove, Ravensclint," said Hardman, with forced and sarcastic gaiety, "there's the lottery ticket—marriage is said to be a lottery, is it not? Come, man, don't be so funky—you're as white as a sheet. Shall I ask the chambermaid to inquire for a bottle of *sal volatile*, or for some lavender drops?"

His Lordship did not appreciate the joke; it was quite a *mauvaise plaisanterie* to him; and he stood actually trembling, with the unopened letter in his hand.

"Here, come into the coffee-room, there's no one in it," said Hardman, seeing his companion's agitation.

They entered it, and sat down by one of the windows. Then Lord Ravensclint opened the envelope, and read the note which it enclosed, the contents of which, so far as regards Mr. De Lorme's answer to the proposal, the reader will have anticipated.

The young man's face flushed, and then grew

pale again. "D—n—tion," he muttered, at last.

"What! refused—by all that's—" Tom had the word "lucky" on his lips, but checked the utterance of it.

"Not exactly," replied Lord Ravensclint.

"Not exactly! What do you mean? Is there a medium, a third point between yes and no?"

"Take the letter and read it."

Hardman took the note with his great, steady hand, and read it slowly through, without making an observation.

"Well?" said he, as he returned it.

He waited a few seconds for an answer to his very indefinite query. Lord Ravensclint was looking again at the letter, and biting his lips to the total extinction of what little colour they had possessed. His countenance betokened mortification and indecision.

"Well?" repeated Tom: "what's the next move?"

"Hang me if I know."

"You had better hire a lodging, George," said

Tom, quietly. "You'll find it expensive staying at a hotel so long."

"What for? What do you mean by so long?" asked his Lordship, losing his temper at what he saw was raillery, though he did not understand it.

"Why you see," replied Hardman, pretending not to notice Lord Ravensclint's vexation, "that at present your plans are uncertain. They must be, you know, after that," he continued, pointing to the letter. "These De Lormes will probably remain here some time: they did so last year. Any how, they are not likely to be in a hurry to give you a release. You cannot therefore foresee how long your time of probation is to be."

"What the plague do you mean?"

"Nay, what does the letter mean, my Lord? Listen, it does not require a Solomon to read it right. 'There has existed between your Lordship and my daughter an acquaintance, as yet so limited, that, although entertaining every sentiment of regard for yourself, and fully ap-

preciating the preference which your letter announces, I should not feel justified in urging my daughter, at present, to accept the very flattering proposal which it contains.' How do you read that sentence, Ravensclint?"

"How do you, Tom? Is it not a direct refusal."

"No, it's not, Ravensclint. It is ten thousand times worse. What does it mean? Why this—and it's plain as the nose on your face—that the lady cannot make up her mind to marry you as yet, perhaps not at all—it does not matter why—a preference elsewhere, or perhaps she thinks you a bore—don't be angry, I am only supposing a motive—but papa and mama consider you too good a fish to let go, though they cannot land you quite immediately, for the young lady won't gaff you: so they'll continue playing you for a time, letting out the line or winding up the reel as occasion may require."

"But I'm not going to be treated that way Tom."

"You won't find it amusing, being kept here

when all the hunting men are gone, and you have the billiard tables to yourself; you can, however practice with the markers, or take the waters for the benefit of your health. I think I see you, George, in your tidy lodgings, reading "Knigge's rules for lovers." I've seen such a book, or at least a chapter with such a heading. Well, old fellow, I'll take care to send you 'Bell's Life,' when there is anything particular in it, by way of a change for Knigge. You can read it on the sly; ha, ha."

"I'll not stand that, though."

"But you must, Ravensclint, unless the young lady throws herself at last on your generosity, and informs you—a pleasant hearing forsooth—that she loves some one else passionately—she has done so for years, and so on, and begs you to think no more of her; and, perhaps, asks you to help her to run off with your rival. It's not a pleasant position, any part of it, Ravensclint; but to feel that everyone else knows what is going on, and is watching the performance, to see old dowagers laying their heads together, young ladies giggling

and grinning as you dangle after the cruel fair one down the parade, not meeting a man who would make a bet with you on your chances of success, all your acquaintances being off to the spring meetings at York, or Doncaster, or Newmarket—by Jove, Ravensclint, I couldn't stand it a week."

"How shall I get out of this infernal business, Tom."

"Easily enough, if you wish to do so; but, perhaps, you would fancy that sort of life for three or four months?"

"I shouldn't, though!"

"Well then, be a man for once in your life, Ravensclint, and sit down and write a note to this very considerate father, who has the utmost regard for you—he says so, I think—and who imagines he has got you well hooked, and that you will not break his hold. Just tell him that you have received his reply, which, in your opinion, is tantamount to a refusal; and that, henceforth, you beg to consider yourself, and of

course the lady, perfectly free. It's easy enough to do this, if you really want to get loose. But I really doubt your wishing it, Ravensclint."

"I wish you would write the note, Tom; I am not a good hand at that sort of business, and I will copy it."

The victorious Tom had his hand on the bell in a moment.

"A couple of sheets of note paper and an envelope," said he to the waiter.

In half-an-hour, the note was written, copied, despatched, and received, to the satisfaction of Hardman, the relief of Lord Ravensclint, the chagrin of Mr. and Mrs. De Lorme, and the great joy of their daughter.

Lord Ravensclint, and consequently Tom Hardman, left Leamington a short time afterwards.

Poor Mary had anything but a pleasant life for some time after this explanation; for Mrs. De Lorme considered that she was only doing her duty in reminding her perpetually of the extreme folly of her attachment to Harry Montague, and

of her perverseness in refusing the hand and expected honors of Viscount Ravensclint.

Did it ever strike Mr. or Mrs. De Lorme that their daughter was not the only one to blame for her crime of falling in love with a younger son; and that, in tolerating Montague as the constant companion of Sir Frederick Courtenay—the desirable son-in-law—they had themselves given the former many opportunities of perpetrating the iniquity of winning her affections.

Yet, as Mary had told her mother, Montague had not (nor—to anticipate—did he for some time) ventured to solicit her hand. Until his future was brighter, he shrank from the fear of marring her prospects, though he well knew, as she did also, that their attachment was mutual. It is a common delusion to think that Cupid has no business with hearts that beat under empty pockets. We see every day some worthy parent filling his house with young men. They shoot his game, drink his wine, dance with his daughters, and, in return for his hospitality, very probably fall in love with them.

My dear Mr. Paterfamilias, do not be agitated ; was this a very improbable consequence of their visit. Young men may very likely, even though they be not eldest sons, both lose their own and win the hearts of others ; and do not be in a passion, my dear sir, and blame your pretty daughter, if she should lose sight of the advantages of primogeniture, and fall in love with a mere cadet. Who took her to the ball where he first met your daughter ? Who asked him to your house ! Who mounted him on one of your horses to escort your daughter to see the hounds throw off ? True, say you, but young Lord Stork, and the Honorable Harry Eaglet were at the ball, too, and they both danced with her ; and Mr. Fortunespet, who has just come into his godfather's, old Longpurse, property, has been staying with you, and you mounted him as well. Yes, my dear Paterfamilias, but don't imagine that a winning tongue, or a clever head, or a handsome face, or a warm heart are, or ought to be, neutralised by the one fact of their belonging to a younger brother.

Remember, also, my dear sir, that in no family is there more than one eldest son, but there may be a dozen younger ones : and, therefore, the chances always were that your daughter would marry one of the latter class.

So don't, my dear sir, don't speak crossly to her, and bring tears into her pretty eyes, and give her a headache, and make her miserable ; but (if there be no other serious objection to the match) take her to your arms, and kiss her blushing cheek, give her your consent, make her joyful, hope for the best ; and know that it never entered into the plan of Providence that none but the marriages of eldest sons are to be happy.

CHAPTER IV.

Love has slow death, and sudden ; wretches prove,
That fate severe, the sudden death of love.

* * * * *

Others there are with whom love dies away,
In gradual waste and unperceived decay.

CRABBE.

For when the heart conceives
Thoughts of deep vengeance on a foe, what means,
T'achieve the deed more certain than to wear
The form of friendship, and, with circling wiles,
Inclose him in th' inseparable net.

ROCHLLUS.

WITHIN this chapter I must take leave to crowd the results of a considerable period of Sir Frederick and Lady Courtenay's married life.

A good deal of company had been entertained at Lowick, soon after their arrival there. Although there could be but one opinion of Lady

Courtenay's beauty, her neighbours and visitors did not appear taken with her manner and character. There was a coldness in her deportment to her guests which forbade intimacy, and she seemed to go through the formalities of courtesey and hospitality as a matter of necessity rather than of inclination.

With her husband, too, there was a want of the cordiality, openness, and confidence, which are necessary to make marriage a perfect union. But all went on—shall I say well?—smoothly, at least, although Fred would have gladly exchanged some of his wife's stately beauty for a little more liveliness and interest in his pursuits. After the second winter passed in the country, the inconstant fellow began to tire of his fine place. Fred felt, or fancied he felt, that excitement was indispensable to him—he had not enough of it in the country. It is a dangerous fancy, for excitement is like any other stimulant, snuff, opium, wine; the habit grows with indulgence.

Sir Frederick and his wife were now in London.

Courtenay and O'Neill had not met for a long time. The latter had made a very short stay in Leamington after the very unwelcome intelligence which he received at their first greeting, on his return from Ireland. Since that time, he had been exercising his talents in the capacity of what he had told his mother he might become—a *chevalier d'industrie*. That profession is not one which thrives long in the same place, and, therefore, Dermod was again in England, having left his companion Captain Brown on the continent, with his other associates and confederates. Sir James Long Hardup had been what his friends called "unfortunate." Those who had his I. O. U.'s were still more so, for to them his very existence seemed problematical, though the value of those securities was not at all so.

Courtenay was, one day, startled by a servant announcing Mr. O'Neill. Dermod was welcomed by his old schoolfellow with all frankness and warmth, and pressed to stay and renew his acquaintance with Lady Courtenay.

Dermod assented, and, although Sir Frederick

had not forgotten to tell Lady Courtenay, who was out when Dermod arrived, of the addition to their party, she changed colour when she entered the room in which O'Neill was. Dermod was too keen sighted not to perceive the flush of her cheek—and an inward curse rose from his heart as he beheld, for the first time since her marriage, the prize that he deemed Courtenay had won from him.

The evening passed slowly. There was a constraint upon the party, but it affected Sir Frederick less than his wife and their guest. It was still early when Lady Courtenay excused herself from remaining in the drawing room on the plea of having to dress for a ball.

She went to the ball alone. It was no longer an unusual circumstance that she should do so, and, even to those who did not make it the business of their lives to pry into other people's affairs, it was becoming a matter of surprise that Sir Frederick should be seen so little with his beautiful wife.

Julia was fast realizing the state of matrimony

she had advocated, in talking of her friend Lizzy Lovegrove's rejection of the wealthy baronet, Sir Benjamin Nugget. Her path and her husband's were becoming parallel only, not the same.

Lady Courtenay was beginning to feel lonely and unhappy. Her cold, distant deportment checked the advances of friendship or intimacy, and she was solitary, even among the crowd of her acquaintances.

It was a relief to her when Sir Frederick had some of his friends to dinner, or when they dropped in during the evening, for there were some pleasant men among them, although it might not always have been prudent to enquire into their characters and habits.

O'Neill became a frequent guest.

Montague was rarely a visitor. Besides that Harry was indefatigable in endeavouring to rise in his profession, and consequently eschewed late hours, Fred gave him little encouragement to come, he was actually afraid of his old friend. Why? fear is the natural homage paid by vice and folly to merit and good conduct, and Fred

could not look Harry Montague in the face and not feel self-rebuked.

After the London season, the Courtenays returned to Lowick. If the few hours that Fred devoted to his home during the constant excitement of his life in town seemed slow, and heavy, it was with leaden foot that the months advanced in the dullness and monotony of the country.

Dermod had been invited by Sir Frederick to Lowick; in reality, his staying there was a mutual accommodation. Iveragh had become more distasteful to O'Neill than ever, since the rebuff he had received from "the little lumper." Courtenay had for some time found the attentions due from him to his wife irksome, and was glad enough to delegate them to Dermod. For instance, Lady Courtenay one day, said to her husband, "I wish, Sir Frederick, you would accompany me to-morrow to Colespare."

"I am going to shoot to-morrow," was the reply.

"I suppose it would be expecting too much of you if I asked you to give up one day's shooting."

"It is a long drive; you are not obliged to call to-morrow."

"It is to pay a wedding visit, and I cannot put it off any longer; but pray, Sir Frederick, do not think more of it—I can go by myself."

"You shoot to-morrow," said O'Neill coming into the room.

"Yes," replied Sir Frederick, "and as you are not much of a sportsman, will you escort Lady Courtenay to Colespare?"

"I shall be delighted."

"Will that suit you?" said Sir Frederick to his wife.

"Perfectly," replied Lady Courtenay, very coldly.

The visit was paid, and Dermod did not fail in his attentions to Lady Courtenay. Sir Frederick had a good day's sport, and was quite satisfied with all the arrangements of the day.

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Let us pass over the short days of winter, and with them the cold influences of discontent,

uncongeniality, pride, and indifference, which loosened, every day, the ties with which Sir Frederick and Lady Courtenay had bound themselves and each other before the altar.

Fanciful and inconstant even in his amusements, excitements, and excesses, Sir Frederick Courtenay had substituted for the chances of dice and cards, those of the race-course; the turf had become his ruling passion, and, had all those with whom he associated been as honourable and straightforward as himself, it might only have proved a rather expensive amusement. Fred devoted himself to it with the pertinacity of those who make betting their profession and means of livelihood. He had a large racing establishment, nor could he resist the temptation of adding to his stud any horse he took a fancy to, however extravagant the price of it might be, and he might be seen at all the principal racing meetings—a liberal subscriber, and a bold and eager speculator.

Lady Courtenay was, in consequence, still more deserted, and thus deprived of a husband's

guardianship and influence, with no fixed principles to guide and support her, she was cast on the cold waters of a treacherous world.

She scorned the seclusion of her deserted home, and, not unfrequently, escorted by her husband's old schoolmate and friend, Dermot O'Neill, she might be seen the centre of a circle of courtiers and admirers.

Little did she think or heed that there are vultures of society in the shape of profligate, unprincipled men, and that their prey is woman. Lady Courtenay was eminently beautiful; was it not known that her husband neglected her? Round such a one those vultures gather.

CHAPTER V.

"Je ne comprends pas comment un mari, qui s'abandonne à son humeur, qui ne cache aucun de ses défauts, et se montre au contraire par ses mauvais endroits :—peut espérer de défendre le cœur d'une jeune femme contre les enterprises de son galant."

LA BRUYERE.

Felton.—Hit him! How?

Lord Athunere.—I' the brain and heart, sir, without damage to the skin.

SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

"And this man was my friend!

* * * * *

Oh, the coiled snake!

JOANNA BAILLIE.

JULIA COURTENAY was proud, proud to herself as well as to others. She scorned to own even to herself that she—the beautiful, the favored—had not power over her husband's affections, feelings, or actions.

His society had thus become irksome to her, because his want of deference proved the weakness of her influence over him. She forgot that she had never cared to exert that influence while it existed, nor striven either to school her own wayward will, or to fix the inconstant character of her husband. What charms then, had home for him? Retrospection and reflection, too, were unpalatable ; for if pride forbade their only just effect, a change in herself, and a strong effort to win back her husband's affection, what could they induce but regret, mortification, self-reproach?

She would fain, then, strangle thought, and jostle self-examination from her mind in a perpetual whirl of dissipation, and a ceaseless round of excitement and amusement. Thus she—

Plays the city lady to the height—
Her mornings given to mercers, milliners,
Shoemakers, jewellers, haberdashers ;
Her noons to calls ; her afternoons to dressing ;
Evenings to plays and drums, and nights to routs,
Balls, masquerades ! Sleep only ends the riot
Which waking still begins !

Bah ! the attempt was impossible, and yet it was bravely made ; and not one of those ambitious

dames or their beauteous daughters who, night after night formed the brilliant galaxy of London's brightest circles, ever imagined, as they confessed, some without guile, and many with envy, that Lady Courtenay was the most brilliant star among them—that those expressive eyes and smiling lips were not the faithful indices of the emotions which now fevered her throbbing brain, and swelled to sickness her pride-worn heart.

For, sure as the ebb and flow of the ocean's tide, a re-action would follow the mad excitement into which she plunged, and in proportion as her forced spirits and stimulated animation flowed high, so was their ebb low, and far from the barren fruitless stream of her joyless heart.

Lady Courtenay was seated on a sofa in a richly furnished apartment of her London house.

No cost had been spared in its decoration. The thickest hangings flanked the windows—a gaily worked *portière* was drawn back beyond the wide folding doors of the inner room; the choicest specimens of Indian and European

china, vases of Sèvres, groups of Dresden manufacture, products of the far East, of uncouth pencilling, but of the finest porcelain and the most brilliant colouring, were distributed around; brackets of the finest finish broke the monotony of the walls, and supported here a tazza of rare Venetian glass, there the most delicate work of the chisel, There were on the inlaid tables some exquisite miniatures—among which, not the least lovely, was the portrait of Julia herself—and books whose prints, illuminations, and type, were the *chef d'œuvres* of art.

Lady Courtenay was dressed in a costume appropriate for a *fête champêtre* which was that day to be given by the rich and magnificent Duchess of Dazzledom.

The carriage had been ordered for three o'clock; soon after which time Lady Courtenay had entered the room, some of the details of which we have just given.

The horses of the carriage, proud and high-spirited as they were, had long stood statue-like, as well-trained London horses do, except when

they tossed their lofty heads as some impertinent fly settled on neck or ear, or when they rubbed their velvet-like noses on the pole from sheer *ennui*, and the wigged and powdered coachman had dozed and woke, and dozed again, and still her ladyship made not her appearance, nor stirred from her seat.

She glanced at the clock; the hands pointed to half-past four. A slight flush rose upon her cheek, and her lips for an instant were more closely compressed; but she moved not from the sofa on which she had sat so long thoughtful and resting her head on her gloved hand. She merely leant back with an expression of resolution and endurance.

The clock struck five—half-past five—and had almost chimed six, when Sir Frederick entered the room.

“Dear me,” he exclaimed, “why have you not gone to the Duchess’?”

“I thought, Sir Frederick,” replied Lady Courtenay, with forced composure, “that you had expressed a wish to go there yourself; indeed,”

she added, and there was some sarcasm and bitterness in her tone, "I remember that you desired me to wait for you, even if you should be a few minutes late. You will perceive that it is now six o'clock; the carriage was ordered at three."

"So I see," replied Sir Frederick, "but I met Lord Ascott and Handicap on their way to see poor Raker's horses and dogs sold, among the latter, that extraordinary French poodle, that does everything but speak: they would have me to accompany them. Besides we wanted to arrange about going to —— races. I have some horses entered for to-morrow, and Fairplay runs on Thursday."

"It is not the first time I have had to thank Lord Ascott and Mr. Handicap for a disappointment," said Lady Courtenay, rising, and ringing the bell.

"The carriage need not wait any longer," she said to the servant.

"But you might still go the Duchess," said Sir Frederick.

"Thank you," replied Julia; "Mamma and Mary were both to leave the fête early, for they return to Marlinton to-morrow. I told you I wished to be at the Duchess' early, for I shall not have another opportunity of seeing them for months; I have no particular desire to offer the excuse to the Duchess for coming when everyone is going away, that I was prevented from coming sooner because Sir Frederick Courtenay was engaged at a sale of pointers and poodles."

Lady Courtenay then left the room with flashing eyes and an angry flush on her face.

She remained for some time in her own apartment. She did not weep, but she thought long and bitterly, till her head ached and her mind became confused.

After a time, she rang for her maid, and quietly dressed for dinner, and then she went down stairs with her usual firm step, to the drawing room.

The servant, on announcing dinner, added "Sir Frederick left word he was dining out, my Lady."

“And Sir Frederick leaves for ——— to-morrow early, does he not?”

“Yes, my Lady.”

A flush tinged Lady Courtenay's cheek, but she said nothing, and descended to her solitary meal. The dishes were well dressed, the plate was handsome, the attendants well appointed, but Lady Courtenay had no appetite; her scanty dinner was soon concluded, and she returned to her seat on the sofa in the gorgeous drawing-room.

She presently rang the bell. “Order the carriage round,” she said to the servant.

In a few minutes, he returned, “Sir Frederick has not sent it back yet, my Lady.”

“Let it come to the door as soon as it returns.”

When the servant had left the room, Julia leant her head on her hand, and seemed to struggle with some strong emotion. Whatever it was, she gained the mastery, or at least the contest was soon over. When she withdrew her hand, no tear stood in her dark eyes, no frown was upon her smooth brow, there was merely a mark of compression on her cheek.

"The carriage is at the door, my Lady," said the servant, re-entering the room.

"To the Opera house," said Lady Courtenay, as she passed hastily out.

It is a glorious spectacle, a full house at the Opera. Tier rises upon tier, filled with the noblest and the most distinguished of England's sons, and the most exalted and the fairest of her daughters. Multitudes of lights illumine every portion of the vast edifice, and disclose the wonderfully diversified features of the throng that crowd it. Music, the most enchanting that the deepest feeling and the highest science have imagined, and that the most skilful art and the finest execution have realized, now rolls strong and loud, now breathes soft and plaintive, finding a response and echo in the hearts of the beings around, whose souls are steeped in its magic atmosphere. There comes forth on the stage one not less beautiful than the most beautiful of those who are there to hear her, and she pours forth the wonderful notes of her voice, now sustaining them with slow and precise accuracy, now reveling

rapidly in the most intricate mazes of sound, in the richest and most profuse ornamentation, till the suspended breathing and the stilled lips of her enraptured hearers at length find relief in a burst of universal applause and wonder.

It was in the midst of such a scene that Lady Courtenay entered the Opera-house, where she had a box for the season. She had arrived late, and hers was almost the only box unoccupied.

She took her seat alone within it, and without feeling much interest in the splendid spectacle around her. Her heart was heavy, and within her mind there were many bitter thoughts; and, as she leant back away from the glare of the lights, and the search of the lorgnettes, she was occupied with her own thoughts rather than with any other object—perhaps she was not the only one so engaged.

She had not been long seated when the door of her box opened, and a gentleman presented himself.

“Ah! Lady Courtenay,” said he, “I have been watching your box; I felt sure you would

not miss this night; does not —— sing divinely?"

"I fear I have scarcely paid her the attention she merits."

"You are not ill, Lady Courtenay?"

"Oh! no. A slight head-ache only."

"I hoped and expected to have met you at the Duchess of Dazzledom's fête. I waited long I assure you, in hopes of your arrival. It was, I trust, not indisposition that prevented your being present."

"I was prevented," replied Lady Courtenay, hastily, "by Sir Frederick, who went to Tattersall's, and kept me waiting till it was too late to go."

"It was a magnificent affair," observed the gentleman, affecting not to notice the heightened colour which had spread over Lady Courtenay's countenance; "you would have enjoyed it I am sure. Mrs. and Miss De Lorme were there; they seemed much disappointed at not seeing you. But, my dear Lady Courtenay, forgive me for renewing your vexation, I see it has annoyed you;

Sir Frederick could not have been aware of your wish to attend the fête; he did not know that Mrs. De Lorme and your sister were to be there."

"He knew it as well as I did," replied Lady Courtenay, again surprised into a thoughtless and dangerous admission.

"Forgive me for pleading a cause where appearances are against it, but I would fain doubt such apparent indifference and disregard of your feelings," and the gentleman pronounced the words slowly and in a low and cautious tone, as though he was uncertain how they might be received, and, at the same time, he looked steadily at Lady Courtenay's countenance.

But the pride on which she had supported herself, and which would once have resented the mere hint of a fact she could not conceal from herself, had given way; and the gentleman observed, with something of triumph, that neither in feature nor word was there an attempt at a denial of the charge which he had so artfully introduced.

He did not leave Lady Courtenay's box again that evening.

Of that vast assemblage two at least paid little attention to the Opera, and before the curtain rose for the appearance of the "*reine des coulisses*" to receive the plaudits and bouquets which were showered upon her, those two had left the house.

There had, however, been time for much conversation, carried on in low but earnest tones. In it there were comprised reminiscences of past days, comparisons of many feelings, and there were admissions and disclosures greater than one of those two had dreamt of hearing, and the other had ever yet acknowledged.

Sir Frederick had not come home when Lady Courtenay reached her house. She proceeded at once to her own apartments, nor thought for a moment of waiting for him; such an attention had long since been discontinued, for little could she guess the uncertain hour of his return.

Her face was very flushed, her head was hot, and her temples were throbbing; she felt fevered and bewildered. Mechanically she placed her finger on the pulse of her wrist, and she started when she found it beating so quick and hard.

She might be ill, and fever or inflammation might be imminent—already set in perhaps. No, there existed more moral than physical disturbance, and on that night she took no heed of the warning thus beautifully expressed by the old physician: “sleep is so like death; I dare not trust it without my prayers and a half adieu unto the world, and take my farewell in a colloquy with God.”

How different her soliloquy! “What would I not do to humble him? He shall learn that I can resent his neglect! I have submitted to it too long. He will—he shall—find that there is a limit to endurance, that I can return him scorn for scorn, desertion for desertion!”

Short-sighted lady! can you not see the frightful peril to which your pride and folly are exposing you?

“What care I what the world will say?—the heartless, false, mockfaced world! It will make him shrink and shudder. Ha! ha! how he will rage and fret when he finds that the caged bird can use her wings; that the neglected, forgotten wife can dare the anger, and set at nought the authority of her lord and husband. Ha! ha! it was not a bad idea. But the world will talk! Bah! let it talk, and talk till it is hoarse.”

Lady! lady! you are playing a dangerous game. It is seldom safe to set public opinion at defiance.

“Oh! the revenge will be glorious. A week hence, and his proud spirit will be low enough. Will he not then be glad enough to sacrifice his horses and his gambling, my Lord Ascott, Mr. Handicap, and all the crew, to lure back, if he can, the bird he has neglected—the bird that is safe, safe away.”

Safe! Lady, lady! You know not how false is the man you have confided in. Has he forgotten the score he vowed to balance on that day when he first deemed your hand torn from

him by his rival! Has he no other thought but that in common with yours—revenge? He may prove, alas! to your great detriment, as well as to that of the friend who has trusted him, that “the memory of past favours is like a rainbow—bright, vivid, and beautiful; but it soon fades away; the memory of injuries is engraven on the heart, and remains for ever.” And he knows, too, lady, though you think not of it, that once the fatal step is taken, you are in his power, his without redemption.

Oh! lady, lady! dare not with these thoughts to lay your head on your pillow, and close your eyes in sleep, for it may be the sleep that “knows no waking.”

CHAPTER VI.

Tinsel.—Who? Richard Cricket! you must see him, Rochdale
A noble little fellow! a great man, Sir!
Not knowing whom, you would be nobody!
I won five thousand pounds by him.

Rochdale.—Who is he?
I never heard of him.

Tinsel.—What? never heard
Of Richard Cricket! never heard of him!
Why, he's the jockey of Newmarket; you
May win a cup by him, or else a sweepstakes—
I bade him call upon you. You must see him.
His lordship is at home to Richard Cricket.

SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

GREAT, was the excitement throughout the petty provincial town of ———, and merrily pealed forth the bells from its church steeple. Its railway station presented a very unusual aspect of confusion and bustle, as trains after trains, con-

verging from all parts of the kingdom, arrived slowly, like monster serpents on the tortuous lines, and disgorged their freights of human beings upon its platform. Throngs of pedestrians jostled each other on each side of its streets, while in their centre, vehicles of every age and form,—some just out of the builder's work-shop, in the first radiance of paint and varnish, others dragged from the depths of lumber stores, where they had been long consigned to the ravages of moths, and mould, and rust, in the extreme of decrepitude—but all alike, crowded within and without, dashed noisily and recklessly along.

The reason why this town, usually so quiet and monotonous, was thus frightened from its propriety, and its sober citizens were agitated with the perpetual ringing of their own church bells, and the forcible occupation of their habitual places of resort for exercise and business, was that, in its vicinity, was then held an annual racing meeting, the great event of the year, on which its prosperity in no small measure depended.

In a small room of a small house in this town,

Lord Ravensclint and Tom Hardman were sitting on the forenoon of the second day of the great racing meeting.

The former had still the same lean cadaverous look; the latter the same hard Herculean frame.

I might, if my tale required it, chronicle some of their adventures since their last appearance, but it suffices to say that the reputation of neither had derived from them additional respectability. Lord Ravensclint had proved no exception to the truth of the trite proverb, and by constant companionship with Hardman, and participation in his rather unscrupulous practices, his lordship's character had received an infusion of his associate's principles, without the cunning or cleverness which turned them to account. Altho' Lord Ravensclint's rank had—as is sometimes admitted in the code of the world's morality—glossed over certain transactions of more than doubtful import, and his naturally inoffensive disposition had disarmed public censure, people were not disposed to extend the same indulgence towards his less aristocratic and ingenuous companion.

Tom Hardman had, therefore, come to be looked upon with considerable suspicion. People had talked very freely about him with regard to certain discreditable details in the sale of a horse,—unwarrantably, perhaps, for his name did not appear in the trial which it gave rise to;—and it was whispered—again, no doubt maliciously, for it was never brought home to him—that, one night, when there was some high play at his friend Lord Ravensclint's rooms, Tom went away a very large winner, and that this result had been effected by loaded dice or peculiar cards, in fact, that it had not been “all on the square.”

But Tom, with the magnanimity which rectitude and injured virtue inspire, disregarded these ill-natured rumours, and the occasional “cut direct” he encountered, and pursued the “even tenor of his way,” comforting himself with the reflection that “he that wins may laugh.”

His friend and he, I said, were sitting together.

Lord Ravensclint was dressed, as usual, in the extreme (folly) of the fashion; Tom in a costume which did not seem to suit him as well as

the rough habiliments which he usually wore: it was a black suit, and a wide black cloth band was round his hat.

“Well, Ravensclint,” said he, “I hope you have not got us into a scrape this time: have you done anything since you came here?”

“Ya-as; but you had better have some breakfast, Tom; you look used up.”

“No wonder, I’ve been travelling these two nights, and, what is not usual in these days, one of those nights was passed on the top of a coach. It never was an agreeable way of spending the dark hours, and we think twice as much of these annoyances as we used to do. It was like going back five and twenty years, finding oneself in that Welsh county. There is some talk of a railway though. I had not been at home for an age; it is a good many years now since I cut the high stool and the parchments.”

“When did you leave home?” asked Lord Ravensclint.

“As soon as I could, you may depend upon it,

after the funeral," replied Hardman. "Heard the will read, though," he added, colouring.

"Well, Tom; satisfactory?"

"Very," answered Hardman, bitterly; "very satisfactory. I wouldn't have been caught doing the dutiful, if I had known what I was to listen to. What would you think, Ravensclint, if, instead of hearing that you were five or ten thousand pounds richer, you had to listen to a sermon, and, at the end of it, find a magnificent bequest of nineteen guineas to buy a bible and a prayer book By ——, if there was a chance of a flaw, I'd dispute the will. My father has drawn up too many to leave a weak place in his own, and I've learnt enough of the cursed rigmarole of such documents to know that it would be useless to attempt it."

"It's a pity," observed his Lordship. "I'm dooced sorry for you, Tom."

"If there's a sixpence," continued Hardman, "there's good five-and-twenty thousand pounds to be divided between my brother and sister;

no small savings out of a business in an out of the way Welsh town."

"It's a bad job, I'm afraid, Tom."

"D—d bad. I had better have humoured the governor, and stuck to the desk; but those infernal parchments, with their words upon words, and their interminable sentences, as long, but not half so easy to get over, as Beacon course; I never could stand the humbug. It suits my brother, a good, plodding respectable fellow; I believe he'll be found some day on his high seat turned into a sheepskin."

"'Pon my word, Tom, I'm really dooced sorry for you," repeated his Lordship. "Have a kidney or a chop?"

"Well, d—n them all," said Hardman, summing up; "it's a sell for me, but it's no use fretting. A chop, please. Now, then, let's have a look at your book, or you can read it while I am getting through these things. I've had my wits about me since we parted, and I've got two or three pieces of information that may be useful."

"How did you manage that Tom? You were not likely to meet any racing men in your country."

"No, but when I started home, I had an idea that I might not be able to join you here—I would not have done so, either, if I had been treated properly; no, I would not have gone straight from the funeral to a race-course—so I left word for my letters to be sent to ——. I found them there. Eavesdrop says, Handicap's colt is certain to win —shire Stakes. Fair-play is all right again; little Ferreter, the tout, saw him take a rattling gallop. But come, let us see what you have done."

Lord Ravensclint took out his betting book and began to read.

"Catchgull Stakes: The Rogue against the field; one hundred to fifteen hundred.--Bolter."

"Well, that's not bad," said Hardman. "I don't know that Bolter is the safest man in the ring, though."

"The Goneaway against the field; one hundred to four thousand."

"What on earth made you back that brute? He's as good as boiled. I believe at this moment he is carrying a baker's boy in Dublin. Go on."

"The field against Fairplay; seven monkeys to four."

"Nonsense, Ravensclint; you've not done that. You've made a mistake in entering the bet. It must be the other way. I told you to back the horse, not to lay against him. He can't lose. I know his trial was an honest one. By Jove, Ravensclint, this is too bad."

"I thought you told me to lay the odds, Tom," said his Lordship, in a deprecatory tone.

"Thought be d—d. You have put your foot in it. I agreed to share losses and gains with you, but such a mistake is enough to put an end to our confederacy. I must be off to the subscription rooms, and see if I can get a hedge or find some way of getting out of this infernal scrape. What other folly have you committed? Have you got anything else down in your book?"

"No, Tom," replied Lord Ravensclint, although he had entered another bet or two.

"Well, you've done enough for once," said Hardman, and he pushed his plate and knife and fork from him, and left the room in the worst of tempers.

Lord Ravensclint did not offer to accompany his friend, but remained, feeling he had done a very stupid thing. He sat alone for about an hour, when Hardman made his appearance, looking very angry.

"By, — Ravensclint," he exclaimed, "there is no getting out of the scrape which your infernal folly has got us into; and to make matters still more pleasant, that fellow Harker declares he'll post me if I don't pay him before the meeting is over, what I lost on the Scaramouch Stakes in the spring. My evil star is in the ascendant with a vengeance."

"I'm doocedly annoyed, Tom; what is to be done?"

"Why, as we can't get out of the mess by fair means, what is there for it but to try foul? I'll see what can be done with Rowell."

"Ah! but what can he do for us?"

"Why, you don't even know who is to ride;

he is on Fairplay, of course. But it won't do for me to go to him; can't I get a message sent?"

"I can send my servant," replied Ravensclint.

"Do it then, quickly. Here, write a note to Rowell, I'll dictate."

Of course Hardman had a motive in getting Lord Ravensclint to write the missive—he had no wish to let his name appear in the business.

The message was sent, and, in a short time, it was announced that Mr. Rowell was in attendance upon Lord Ravensclint.

"Walk in, Rowell," said Hardman familiarly, "glad to see you; I am sure Lord Ravensclint is much obliged to you for attending so promptly to his lordship's note. I don't know if you are acquainted with each other—Lord Ravensclint, Mr. Rowell."

Mr. Rowell, by profession a jockey, was evidently intended as such by nature; he was a sample of that duodecimo edition of humanity, which she strikes off sometimes—just as we see rare speci-

mens of typography, in very limited, and, therefore very valuable impressions. There was nothing dwarfish, monstrous, or repulsive about the little man—he was well formed, the scale had only been reduced one half. His dress was neat and simple—drab trousers, rather tight, a wide, black, cut-away coat, a long, plain, green neck-handkerchief, without any appearance of shirt-collar.

“Have a glass of champagne,” suggested Lord Ravensclint, whose experience had convinced him that champagne was a favourite beverage among gentlemen of Mr. Rowell’s profession.

“Thank you, my Lord,” replied that individual affirmatively.

“Tom, ring the bell, and let us have some up.”

A bottle was presently on the table together with glasses.

“Your health, Mr. Rowell,” said Lord Ravensclint.

“And professional success,” added Hardman.

"Yaas, certainly; by Jove, you handled Split the Wind magnificently yesterday. It was a dooced close shave though."

"Thank you, my Lord; your Lordship is quite right. I never rode a closer race. When Razorbill came up to my girths, I thought it was all over; you'd see that, my lord."

"Yaas, but you landed him a clever winner at last."

"Aye," interrupted Hardman, "I wish I had seen the race; the men at the betting rooms were all talking of your finish. They say it was the finest piece of riding seen this season."

Mr. Rowell was evidently much flattered at the compliment, but, being at a loss for a fitting acknowledgment, lifted his glass to his lips, with "your health, my lord, your health, Mr. Hardman," and tossed off the sparkling contents.

"I tell you what, Rowell," said Hardman, "although Lord Ravensclint has very gladly drunk your health and your professional success generally, he would not like to see you win on Fairplay to-day."

"How so, Mr. Hardman," quoth the jockey; "his lordship has not laid against Fairplay."

"Unfortunately he has," replied Hardman; "a mistake, quite a mistake, Mr. Rowell, too late, I fear, to set matters right now."

An inarticulate expression of regret was the only observation.

"You could not give his Lordship a lift, could you, Rowell," continued Hardman.

"I have money on Fairplay myself, Sir."

"A heavy stake, Mr. Rowell?"

"Why, I don't say it's a fortune—four or five hundred, perhaps."

"I don't think his Lordship would mind sacrificing the double of that; what say you Ravensclint?"

"No, certainly, I suppose not, Tom; and Mr Rowell is such a beautiful rider, no one would be a bit the wiser, if—"

"No, no," interposed the jockey, at the same time draining the glass Hardman had filled again for him; "Sir Frederick is a liberal man.

I know he stands to win a lump of money, he'll not miss a five hundred pound note out of it after the race. Why, he gave little Swansdown a couple of hundred for winning the Scaramouch stakes in the spring, and the boy had nothing to do but to sit quietly, and let the colt gallop away with the four stone three that he carried. I never shall have a better chance of making a good thing of a race. I was on Fairplay yesterday morning; he went beautiful—sound as a roach, and fit—why, he's fit to run for a kingdom. We all know he's as game as a pebble, and by —— I believe he's as fast as he is lasting."

"Have another glass of champagne, Mr. Rowell?" suggested Lord Ravensclint.

"No more, thank you, my lord; I must be going."

Mr. Rowell took up his hat.

"Good morning, my lord," said he to the young nobleman, whose eyes and intellect seemed by no means brightened by the early glasses of champagne he had taken.

"I say, Rowell," whispered Hardman, following the little man out of the room, "just step in here a minute."

And Hardman drew the jockey into another apartment.

They remained together about a quarter of an hour; after which, Hardman returned to Lord Ravensclint, whom he found sitting in a state of abstraction or vacancy.

"Come, rouse up, Ravensclint," said Hardman, "I've got him to do it; but he has driven a d——d hard bargain with us, and hang me if I can quite depend upon the fellow, as it is. Here, just sign this, Ravensclint. He's waiting in the other room, and is in a tremendous hurry: he says he will be missed. Quick."

Lord Ravensclint raised himself, and wrote the feeble, unsteady letters of his signature on the paper, without reading what preceded it, and Tom instantly vanished.

He was only absent a minute or two.

"Well, Ravensclint," said he, entering the room again. "You've given me a plaguy trou-

blesome job to manage. I hope it will be the last; and that it will be a lesson to you, as kind people say when one gets into a scrape. It's no joke when one can't get a thing done without putting one's name down in black and white. I've a horror of that: it's part of my legal education still remaining, I fancy."

"It's all right though now, Tom, isn't it?" asked Lord Ravensclint, raising his sleepy, misty eyes to his confederate's flushed face.

"I hope so. Come, the day is getting on. It is time we should be moving to the course."

CHAPTER VII.

"Such o'er thy level turf, Newmarket, stray,
And there, with other *blacklegs*, find their prey."
CRABBE.

"Hæ! hæ! false to me? to me?"
SHAKSPEARE.

"And to be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness on the brain."
COLERIDGE.

SPECULATION had been busy for many months, and "books" had been "made" to an enormous magnitude upon one subject—an event about to be decided upon the race course near that town where the transaction recorded in the previous chapter took place.

The sporting fraternity were now concentrated in one focus. A motley crew it was. Among

them might be seen the tradesman—seldom, indeed, to be found behind his counter,—who had a book of thousands; the horse-dealer, a first-rate judge of form and action, who had been up and out betimes, to see the racers at exercise; the host of the sporting inn, where lotteries were drawn and the odds given, as if the “Jockey-cap Tavern,” was a branch of the Bank of England, its frequenters the millionaires of Europe, and all their transactions universally recognised and perfectly legal; the exclusive professional, who was seeking a rapid road to wealth and station, and was courted and fawned upon by gentle and noble, and who was ready to lay overwhelming odds against double and treble events; the self-constituted gentleman, with massive chains and diamond rings, the owner of some horses too, all the consequences of one lucky venture, when, without a hundred pounds in the world, he stood to win ten thousand, having his portmanteau ready, and his passport made out, in case he had made a mistake;—but why or how enumerate the components of that

frothy, bubbling, noisy, vapouring cauldron—the ring?

There they were, each and all, the honest man and the rogue, at that gay tryst. There was also, mayhap, one of noble birth and exalted genius, one whose talents had or might have raised him to a high, perhaps the highest place in the council of his sovereign, who, for awhile, would forget party, and place, and the angry strife of the political arena; one who thought the honours of the turf not unworthy of his ambition, whose pride, for the nonce, was

Newmarket fame and judgment in a bet.

“Well, Handicap,” said a flash overdressed man, “you are pretty sure of the ——shire stakes to-day.”

“A pity if I was not,” replied the other.

“There’s nothing like throwing a little dust into people’s eyes,” rejoined the first, “he’s only got a feather on him, and there’s nothing can touch him but Sir Frederick’s colt.”

“ And he can’t give him a stone and his year and beat him.”

The event justified Mr. Handicap’s confidence, Sir Frederick Courtenay’s colt having, however, made a capital race and been beaten by a short neck.

But the chief interest both of the public and of those who prey upon it, was centred in the race in which Sir Frederick Courtenay’s Fairplay was to run, and it was upon this event that speculation had been so long occupied.

Fairplay was a splendid animal, and Sir Frederick had given a very large price for him. He had backed him heavily for this race, and so confident was he in his horse’s merits that he had not hedged any portion of his investments.

Fairplay was not, however the first favourite for the quotation of the odds on; the evening before the race announced that only five to four were laid against Mr. Trickster’s Slyboy, while seven to four were offered against Fairplay, and eight to one was taken against Mr. Handicap’s Doubtful, with higher figures against the other probable starters.

On the morning of the race, the public, that very gullible confiding body of individuals, was as much astonished at if a thunderbolt had fallen in the centre of the stand by the announcement that Mr. Trickster's Slyboy had been scratched at twenty nine minutes and a half after ten o'clock, a.m.

The race was now considered a certainty for Sir Frederick Courtenay. Fairplay sprung up to two to one upon him, and again his sanguine owner laid out a considerable sum upon his horse.

The race is about to be run. The field is not a monster one, but a sufficient number of horses is going to start to make a pretty show for the holiday people, and for the many bright, sunny eyes of those ladies fair, who have come to laugh, and flirt, to see and be seen, to drink champagne, and wager gloves.

They—innocent creatures!—believe that all they see done on that smooth course is honest and open, and never imagine that any tricks are played with those beautiful, glossy, high-bred

animals that are walking or cantering before the stand, or making their way down to the starting post.

Now they all wheel round and close together, the gay jackets of the jockeys glistening in the sun like the gaudy wings of some giant butterflies, and, as they mingle together, showing like the varied colours of a distant kaleidoscope.

For an instant they seem almost motionless; a flag is dropped beside them, another a hundred yards in advance; then, as they bound from the starting post with simultaneous motion, a thousand lips ejaculate the words "they're off."

One rushes from the motley cluster like an arrow from the bow; his jockey wears Sir Frederick Courtenay's colours.

"They'll never catch him," says one.

"The hill will choke him at that pace," calls out another.

"He'll win in a canter," shouts a third.

"There's one tailed off already," proclaims a fourth.

They sink below the hill, and for a few seconds

—it seems like so many minutes—are lost to the strained eyes of the spectators. They are in sight again. Fairplay is still leading, but some of the other horses are creeping up, and one has almost reached his quarters. The pace is tremendous. Every head is bent, and every eye is riveted upon the struggle. They round the corner, and come into the straight running. Fairplay still maintains his vantage. A buzz and a murmur, as of a coming tumult, rises among the crowd.

“Sir Frederick wins,” shouts a man, pale with excitement.

“The blue is beat,” screams another.

Onward they come! The race is between two. Fairplay is headed—Doubtful wins!

Sir Frederick Courtenay was grievously disappointed at the result of the race. He had watched it with very great agitation, and his cheek was pale and his hands were cold when he saw the number hoisted to proclaim his adversary's victory.

Yet he believed that his horse had run upon

his merits, and had been honestly beaten. There were, however, much talk and animadversion upon the race. Some said that Fairplay had done his best, and that it was the finest and closest struggle ever witnessed; others maintained that his jockey had made too free with him, and that he should have made a waiting race; but, of course, he rode to orders; others declared that Rowell took a pull (to steady his horse, of course) too near home, and made his rush a yard or two too late; some said the riding was perfection, others called it a robbery.

Bah; that is always the way people talk after a good race. When Sir Frederiek returned to his rooms—he did not do so till late—he found a letter lying upon the table. He was very much annoyed, and still agitated, for he had lost a large sum of money. He took up the letter, though his mind was pre-occupied. The postmark was that of London, the hand-writing his steward's. He opened it slowly and without interest, but, as he read, his flushed cheek grew deadly pale, his hand convulsively closed upon

and crumpled the letter, and he staggered back and sank down upon a sofa. "My God! my God! has it come to this!" he exclaimed aloud, as his hands pressed his brow, and his breathing came quick and short.

Presently, starting up, and furiously ringing the bell, he ordered a carriage to be brought to the door. In a quarter-of-an-hour, he was driving to the railway station.

A train was about to start. Bidding his servant return to the town, he flung himself into the carriage, and, in a few minutes, was on his way to London as fast as steam could bear him.

Yet, in his painful anxiety, he scarcely seemed to himself to move; and, when the train stopped at the stations, the minutes seemed hours, and he called the guard to chide him that he did not keep his time.

Onward he went through the dull silent hours, yet never once did he close those restless eyes that looked out so wildly on the still, dim, placid landscape, and seldom did he rest that bursting

head, on which the night air breathed, but which it failed to cool.

At length the train reached London. Sir Frederick took the nearest cab and drove to his house.

It was early, and in the streets there was little else to be seen than a market cart or a pedestrian whose avocation obliged him to curtail his slumbers, if he would start fairly with his fellow labourers. The very freshness of the morning and the elasticity and purity of the air—short lived indeed—only added to Courtenay's impatience and excitement.

In this state he stopped at the door of his house. Before the driver could descend from his seat, he had himself stepped from the cab and rung the bell. He did so strongly, for, besides that his hand was unnaturally nervous, he did not expect at that hour, to find any of the servants up.

He was therefore surprised, startled indeed, when, even before the peal had ceased, the bolts

were withdrawn and the door opened, and he encountered the sad face of his old steward; the same who on the day Sir Frederick brought his bride to Lowick, had augured happiness to landlord and tenant from his master's marriage.

"I got your letter, Goodridge," said Courtenay.

"It was my duty to write, Sir Frederick. I was sure I might expect you immediately, so I sat up to be ready to receive you."

"She left—when did you say?"

"Oh! Sir Frederick, it is a sad business I fear, but——"

"A truce to regrets," replied Courtenay, impatiently; "when?"

"I came up from Lowick the day before yesterday about the renewal of Redshaw's lease, and found the servants all in a fright, not knowing what to do."

"Then they knew of it."

"They knew, Sir Frederick, that her ladyship had left the house, but when she remained away they got alarmed."

“Who saw her?”

“The coachman, Sir Frederick. He does not stay in the house, you know ; he said he could swear he saw her ladyship stepping into a cab with—with——”

The old man paused and hung down his head.

“Out with it, Goodridge—with Mr. O’Neill,” shouted, rather than spoke, Sir Frederick ; “the doubly——well?”

“I have made what enquiries I could. Havelock had noticed the number of the cab, for it drove past him, and from all I can make out, I believe they went by train to Folkestone.”

“Then it’s no use my delaying longer. Have you any money, Goodridge?”

“I have only ten or twelve pounds ; but the banks open in a few hours.”

“I shall be far enough before then ; give me what you have.”

The old man, with trembling hands, put what money he had got, gold and silver, into his master’s.

“Will you take any refreshment, Sir Frederick?”

“No, no, I want nothing.”

“Pardon me, Sir Frederick, but I hope you will not be rash. For the sake of my old master, be calm, Sir Frederick.”

“Yes, yes—I will—I am.”

“We may yet be mistaken, it may not be so bad as we fear.”

“To be sure, Goodridge, we may be mistaken. Oh! yes we may to be sure,” replied Sir Frederick, bitterly. “I will soon see if we are; the doubly d——d villain—the false hypocrite!”

With these words, Courtenay got again into the cab that had been waiting at the door.

He drove to Montague’s lodgings.

Harry was an early riser, unusually so for a man in London, but he was not up when a loud peal was rung from the house door bell. It was very soon followed by another, and then a servant came to him to say that he was wanted immediately.

He sent word that he would be down stairs as

soon as possible, but very few minutes had elapsed when his door opened, and Sir Frederick rushed into his room.

“What is the matter, Fred?” asked Montague.

“Harry, I believe I am mad, or shall be soon. Can you lend me fifty pounds, twenty-five, twenty?”

“Lend *you* twenty pounds?”

“Ay, Harry, twenty will do ; quick, ask me no more.”

“I have not even so much here. I lent all I had about me to Dermod O’Ne——”

“Dermod O’Neill!” shouted Courtenay. “Oh! worse and worse. But time flies. I’ll get it somewhere; every minute is precious.”

“What is the matter, Fred? You look wild.”

“And well I may. You shall know some day.”

“But what of Dermod?”

“No more, no more now. You shall hear from me, or of me, before long. Farewell, Harry, farewell.”

Sir Frederick rushed out of the room, slamming the door behind him, and Montague, before he could get down-stairs, heard the cab start, and, looking out of the window, saw it drive away at a rapid pace.

Not very many hours afterwards, he received the following letter:—

“Folkestone.

“DEAR HARRY,

“I am compelled to wait in this place till the steamer starts. I have become calmer since I saw you, but hardly enough so to write what I could not tell you.

“But I will have no more secrets from my best friend.

“Yesterday, Harry, I received intelligence that Lady Courtenay had left my house during my absence. Harry, she was not alone! The man I had favoured, trusted—the man I had utterly, implicitly confided in—our friend—oh! what a mockery of the word—Dermod O'Neill, was with her!

“It seemed villainy too great, too base—even

now, it seems impossible—a dream. But it is true.

“If every hour of my future existence were to be so spent, I would crawl through Europe to find that villain. It is not for the vindication of what the world calls honour—honour! pshaw! I have no thought but vengeance.

“Harry, my brain reels, and my heart is sick, but my only desire is to meet that man.

“Now you know all. . Farewell.

“Yours,

“FREDERICK COURTENAY.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there; makes marriage vows
As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul; and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words: Heaven's face doth glow;
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom
Is thought sick at the act.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE worst passions of man's fallen nature had prompted the act which had so wrung Sir Frederick Courtenay's heart. Pride and revenge were the two evil spirits which had led Julia Courtenay from her husband's roof. There was revenge, too, in the heart of him who had suggested and aided her desertion; but other

thoughts, too, urged him on in his base ingratitude to the friend who had cherished him, and in his deep treachery to the lady whom he had pretended to counsel and to guide. But Julia Courtenay was guiltless of aught beyond the one blinding, all engrossing resolution to humble the husband who had neglected her, and to vindicate her injured pride and fallen power; and she—how inconsistently!—deemed that the man who had so heartlessly cast to the winds the friendship of long years, might still be a friend to her.

Pride and revenge then reigned paramount and exclusively in Lady Courtenay's heart. There was, therefore, no semblance of expecting a false protection from the companion who had handed her into a railway carriage; and her form had been erect, her step firm, and her gait haughty and self-reliant, as she had moved along the platform.

She scarcely spoke a word during the time which elapsed before the giant engine had performed its mighty task, and stood motionless

even on the very verge of the pier against which the swelling tide was rising. With scarcely the loss of a few minutes from the appointed time of the journey, the wonderful, the subtle power that gave motion, almost vitality, to the ponderous machine, had transported its freight of human beings to their destination. Good and bad alike had safely arrived, some with evil hearts and guilty thoughts, yet heedless that the fracture of an axle, the breaking of an iron plate, the loosening of a bolt, the sinking of a pier, a landslip, a piece of wood or stone which accident might have placed on any foot of those miles of iron pathway might, in one moment, have stilled for ever those beating hearts and busy brains, and sent for instant judgment those guilty thoughts.

We think, and often remark, when we enter a ship, that there is but an inch board between us and the greedy waters; but when we lie back in the cushioned frame of a first-class seat, and wrap our gaudy rugs about us to keep us warm and comfortable, as we wile away the hours of our

transit with the last shilling novel, does the thought ever strike us that all that keeps us on the necessary track is but an inch of iron, the narrow flange of a brittle wheel, and that were this to fail, our strong, and wide, and luxurious carriages would be mingled together in worse confusion than the house of cards which the child, in very wantonness, throws down!

The vessel was alongside the pier, and the white steam was issuing loudly forth when the train stopped within a few feet of it.

Lady Courtenay let down her veil entirely. Her companion had preceded her, and was offering his arm to aid her descent from the carriage; she had just placed her hand upon it, when another huge, and coarse, and dirty, was laid heavily upon his opposite shoulder, so heavily that he at once turned round.

He encountered the hard, sneering features of an ill-favoured and powerful man.

The individual who confronted O'Neill had, in his other hand, a paper, which he held out to Dermot, saying at the same time, "I b'lieve yer

name's O'Neill. This ere paper 'll hinform you of my bisness. Two hundred—sixty-six—seven—ten;—all right on our side: hope so yer's too."

O'Neill turned deadly pale. "Stand off, fellow," he said, "your business is not with me."

"Come, come," replied the other, at the same time tightning the vice-like grasp of his iron fist upon Dermod's shoulder, "that dodge won't do; it's not worth while telling a lie about the matter; never hurt yer conscience when there's nothing to be got by it, that's my maxim. Bless you, I never forget a face when I've once seed it. I've a gift that way. They tuk me for the job cause I knowed you afore."

"I never saw you in my life," said O'Neill: "what do you mean?"

"Praps, sir," rejoined the man, with pretended politeness, which was yet more offensive than his natural roughness, "you mayn't remember that I had the pleasure of meeting you on bisness 'bout a year ago; small matter—hundred and

'leven, nine—Joel and Son—I've a capital memory. It's all right now, you may depend, and there's nothing like putting all on the square before migratin' to forrin' parts. Pleasant enough towerin about, 'specially with an agreeable companion. Very sorry to spoil yer trip."

Lady Courtenay was standing a few paces off; a silent but indignant spectator; and when the impudent fellow fixed his leering eyes upon her with a coarse stare, the colour might almost have been seen through her doubled veil, spreading over her face, as the consciousness of the false and degrading position in which she had placed herself, flashed upon her mind.

"Come," continued the man, assuming a bolder and ruder, and more natural tone, "it's no use standing here: we shall have a crowd about us presently, and you'll be losing the lady if you don't look sharp." Just then a drunken sailor thrust himself past Lady Courtenay, giving her a rude push. "What's the row?" exclaimed he, staggering up close to O'Neill.

"Come," said the bailiff impatiently: "the two

hundred, sixty-six, seven, ten, down, or else—”

“I’ve not got as much with me,” replied O’Neill.

“Then come along,” answered the other; “there’s no halternative that I knows on.”

“Wait,” whispered O’Neill: “I’ll give you—”

“No, no, that cock won’t fight, there’s too many here as have heard our conversation, seen us leastways. I can’t afford to lose my hemployment.”

The bell from the steamer rang loud and shrill for the second time, and a porter unceremoniously asked Lady Courtenay if she was going by that boat, for it was time she was on board.

“Lady Courtenay,” said O’Neill.

She advanced a step and listened coldly while he whispered a few words to her.

“Is this all your luggage?” said the porter, rather contemptuously, as he lifted a small trunk, which was all she had brought with her. “This way; they’ll haul up the plank in a moment. By ’r leave, by ’r leave,” he called out, jostling his way through the throng on to the ship’s deck

where he carelessly put down Lady Courtenay's box.

"Hold hard a minnit," he shouted, for the third bell had rung and the ropes were being loosened, "hold hard."

The man had just time to jump back on the landing, when the paddles dashed the dirty water into foam, and the vessel swung slowly from the wall.

Lady Courtenay moved on to the after deck; it was crowded with passengers, and, as she advanced, she thought—it might have been only fancy—that some of them turned towards her with looks of rude curiosity. The benches and camp stools were all occupied, and no one offered to make room for her. She drew herself up scornfully, but her inward pride had already fallen.

The sea was not rough, but there was a heavy ground swell, and many of the passengers quickly descended into the cabin. A drizzling rain came on, and Lady Courtenay sought refuge from it below. But the cabin was so hot and crowded,

that she could not remain in it. Again she went on deck, for, rather than remain in the close atmosphere of a cabin, she preferred the exposure to the wet, ill as she was prepared to encounter the fine, yet searching rain, that drifted cold and constant across the ship, and dropped from the yards and rigging. She drew her shawl about her—it was a cashmere, part of her trousseau, and put up her parasol, but what protection was there in this, for it was little larger than a good sized plate, even if its covering of rose-coloured silk and old point lace could have resisted the wet. Yet she scornfully refused an umbrella, because the offer of it was made with light looks and tone.

Thus she remained—pride, and anguish, and humiliation struggling for the mastery within her, till the vessel passed the lighthouse at the end of the long French pier, and the paddles stopping, it glided with a heaving, and as it seemed, an exhausted motion, to the landing place, where the *douaniers* and the *gens d'armes* were

making a clear space for the passengers to disembark.

The rain had increased, and all were anxious to leave the cold, wet deck, and gain shelter. There was much pushing and crowding to get to the gangway, but as the narrow railed plank admitted the passers only in single file, their exit was slow. But Lady Courtenay preferred to stand cold and shivering in the wet, which, she felt, had penetrated to her arms and shoulders, to risking the chance of any discourtesy or rudeness.

It was a relief to her when she found herself once more seated in a railway carriage, and in motion towards Paris.

But she was wretched and uncomfortable, physically and mentally, and thoroughly chilled by exposure to the rain, she felt that the cold had struck into her very bones; each successive half hour added to her discomfort, until her sensations caused a foreboding of serious, perhaps fatal illness.

She began to regret that she had not remained for the night in the town where she had landed, but a feeling of recklessness and bewilderment had impelled her forward to the completion of the journey which had been planned.

Her mind was not more at ease than her body. Her pride had given way, and now that the delusive structure had fallen, how desolate, how degraded, how lost she beheld herself. The finger of scorn would be pointed at her, and who would strike it down; the tongue of scandal would wag glibly, and who would correct the venom? The libertine and the prude would alike be busy with her name, and the triumph of envy, malice, and rivalry, would be complete.

Lady, Lady! this formed no part of you soliloquy that night when you returned from the Opera.

There arose also the apparitions of other figures which after days called up distinctly—her parents, her sister—but, as yet, her mind was too bewildered and darkened to discern them, except dimly as in a mist; there were holier

images too, which afterwards had weight, but the waters that had come over her soul were too much troubled to reflect them plainly, yet was there enough within her, mentally as well as bodily, to make the beginning of the retribution amply severe.

And still, even thus early, and in the darkness which overshadowed all her faculties, a ray, a glimmering rather, of light fell upon her soul, disclosing that unlooked for event, the arrest of her companion, which even her warped reason could not attribute to what is called chance.

Before the train had reached the last station, Lady Courtenay felt seriously ill; but, on her arrival in Paris, she roused herself to exertion, and drove off to the hotel where she had intended to stay. It had been fixed upon as being neither large nor fashionable, and, therefore most likely to secure the privacy Lady Courtenay desired.

Exhausted as she was, Lady Courtenay heard, with great annoyance, that there were no apartments vacant within it.

She was recommended to try another hotel,

but on her way to it she remembered that it was one much frequented by English, and, dreading to be recognised, she stopped the driver and desired him not to proceed to it. As she seemed uncertain what directions to give him, the man suggested a private apartment not far off. This she thought would at least ensure her a temporary place of rest, and afforded the greatest chance of concealment, so she bade him drive her to it.

The apartment was humble but clean, and the woman who received Lady Courtenay seemed civil and respectable; and Lady Courtenay, faint and weary, at once accepted her terms, and begged to be conducted to a bed-room. She merely said she was fatigued, and that she wished to rest.

Lady Courtenay was left alone to unpack her trunk and disrobe; she who had been accustomed to be surrounded with servants; she who was hardly capable of fastening her own sandal, custom had made her so dependent upon the help of others.

She was tempted to ring the bell for assistance. No, it might lead to suspicion and surmise. So she attempted a task she had not performed for years. Disuse and illness made her pause often, and, more than once, she sat down shivering on the bed-side.

It was a night of pain and sorrow, and before the morning broke, though she had listened and longed to hear a footstep in the passage, she was fain to ring her bell, and beg that a physician might be sent for.

He came, and found Lady Courtenay suffering under the worst symptoms of acute bronchial inflammation.

Thus, in the humble room of that unpretending lodging we leave Lady Courtenay, alone—without friend or domestic—among strangers—no clue left to aid the search for the lost sheep—the victim of her own pride and folly—prostrated by a painful and dangerous disorder—alone with her bitter and chastising thoughts—alone beneath the chastening influence of that Being who strikes but to reclaim—alone, for life or for death.

CHAPTER IX.

"I'll prove it on thy heart
Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less
Than I have here proclaim'd thee."

SHAKSPEARE.

"It (duelling) is the manifest offspring of barbarity and folly, a monstrous birth, and distinguished by the most ridiculous and shocking marks of both its parents."

LORD CHESTERFIELD.

THE sun shone brightly on the dancing waters, as the vessel, on the deck of which stood Sir Frederick Courtenay, steamed swiftly from the English harbour. There was no swell upon that changeful channel, not more than a ripple upon its surface.

The passengers were all on deck; and the children ran and played about, and peeped down

at the engine, and wondered at the working of the great pistons, and looked half-frightened into each other's faces as they felt the tremulous vibratory motion beneath their feet.

Ere long, Courtenay was pacing backwards and forwards with rapid and unequal strides, his restlessness increasing as the vessel neared the French coast.

He fancied he had found a clue to the object of his search, and, in a short time, he was proceeding to Paris.

On his arrival there, he sought for information respecting O'Neill in every place which offered the merest possibility of obtaining it; but, though often encouraged by hopes which proved fallacious, and excited by accounts which turned out to be mistaken, he still maintained the opinion that O'Neill had not proceeded beyond Paris or its environs.

Sir Frederick Courtenay's face grew haggard, as, day after day, with painful earnestness he scrutinized the countenances of the passers-by, equally among the business and pleasure seekers

of the capital; or mingled with the gay throng on the terrace at St. Germain; or moved among the spectators at the Grandes Eaux at Versailles; or threaded, with impatient steps, the forest of Fontainebleau.

At night he went to the theatres, and sought a forward place, near the stage, that he might, turning his back to the performance, scan every tier and box.

Thence he would go to the gambling houses. He and his friend! had sometimes—not often, indeed, for Dermot was too cunning a decoy to throw off the mask of prudence and the humility and dependnece of his exaggerated poverty—been to them together.

There was one in the Rue St. ———, kept by an Englishman, and much resorted to by his countrymen. How Fred's heart sank as he passed by the glover's shop! Had the bolt fallen? Was the day of retribution come?

It was a large and gorgeously decorated room within that gambling house that Courtenay entered one night about ten days after his arrival

in Paris. A profusion of lights gave it a dazzling and bewildering brilliancy. The panels around were filled with mirrors; beneath them were buffets covered with wines and refreshments: there were sofas, couches, arm chairs—everything at once to provoke excitement and invite repose.

There was a group of players; their countenances exhibiting emotion in strange contrast to that of the impassive croupier; and constantly and monotonously were repeated changes upon numbers and on the words, “black, odd, under red, even, over.”

Some persons were engaged at hazard, but, among all the players, there was not the man Sir Frederick sought. He threw himself down on a sofa. The game went on, but he heeded not the game nor the players; he scarcely heard the frequent call of “Seven’s the main,” “What do you set;” “Four trey;” “Size ace;” “Deuce, ace;” “Pass the box;” “Seven, seven’s the main;” “Nick by ——.”

Among the players were some of all ages, from the smoothfaced stripling to the hoary, wrinkled

old man; it was a picture of folly, from its first step in youthful health to its trembling gait in self-imposed, long-seated disease. But what cared Sir Frederick for all or any of them?

At last, weary with waiting and want of sleep, he rose.

"I'll leave Paris to-morrow," he said to himself; and, after once more looking at the faces of the players, though he bestowed not a thought upon them or their excitement, with a crushed and sickened heart, he walked through the spacious room and passed out.

The day was just dawning, and the air felt chill and sharp after the warm temperature of the well lighted room.

A figure that instant passed.

Courtenay's hand was on the man.

"Stop!" he exclaimed, "I have found you at last, have I? I know you."

It was O'Neill. He was closely muffled. His cheek was deadly pale: he strove to pass on.

"It is no use," said Courtenay; "I know you

to be Dermod O'Neill, the betrayer of his friend, a villain—am I to add—a coward? Meet me, you must and shall, or, by Heaven, I'll track your course and murder you in your sleep."

"I will," replied O'Neill, "if you will wait till to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow, coward—to-day, this hour, now. I'll not leave you till we have stood face to face with nothing but our pistols between us. We have been *friends* too long," he added, with a fiendish laugh, "to part now."

"Sir Frederick Courtenay, I have said I will meet you: I will, and you shall have the satisfaction you require."

"Satisfaction! pshaw! Do I come like an aping apprentice boy to prate of honour and satisfaction? I will call it by the right word, and that is—vengeance."

"For what? Sir Frederick, perhaps you deem it due for more than it is."

"For what? Is this meant as a fresh insult? Is it not enough to steal away a wife from her husband? to make her falsify her marriage vows?

to sting the friend that harboured the vile viper?—he must be asked his grievance—for what, indeed?”

“I know not where Lady Courtenay is.”

“You are—a—liar.”

“Sir Frederick, let us meet each other as gentlemen.”

“Ay, Dermod, as gentlemen—men of honour—friends; not as a man would meet the thief that has robbed him, the swindler that has cheated him, the dog that has bit the hand that fed him—oh, no! as gentlemen!”

“Here is my card, Sir Frederick, and address. I go now to secure the services of a friend; you can let me know to whom I must refer him on your behalf.”

Courtenay had endeavoured to avoid meeting any of his acquaintances; by some, however, he had been recognized, and to one of them he repaired soon after Dermod had left him, who, he was aware, had no scruples in being a party to the crime of a duel.

A few words, spoken with pain and difficulty,

were sufficient to explain to Colonel Vandeleur the circumstances of the case. Then he returned to his hotel, and, after giving orders that no one was to be admitted except Colonel Vandeleur, he called for writing materials and locked the door of his room. But he was too much agitated to remain quiet, and, for a time, he continued to pace backwards and forwards with hurried steps. At length he drew a chair to the table, sat down, and wrote this letter:—

“ Paris, Hotel ——

“ HARRY,—At length I have discovered him—I will not write his cursed name. I found him last night, or rather this morning, by chance; he seemed disguised, false coward that he is.

“ Before this letter reaches you, one of us will, possibly, have ceased to cumber the earth. I meet him to-morrow morning, and the hours lag, and it seems as if time stood still. I remember Mr. Otley used to say to me ‘never fight a duel,’ and, Harry, if there was one thing I had resolved to be firm upon, it was that. But—well, it is no use to reason upon it; I know it will not bear

argument. He told me he knows not where she is. My answer was the one word 'liar,' for I tracked her, step by step, and I know they left London together: why else is he here?

"You have blamed me, Harry, and not unjustly, for a want of attention, care, guardianship, but surely I did not deserve this return. I am unable to write much, for my brain is confused. Yet I have one favour to ask of my old friend. If I fall, everything I possess will go to one who will be more lenient to my memory than I deserve; for, happily, I have no child who would hold, with my lands and name, the remembrance of a father's guilt and wretchedness, and a mother's shame. But, Harry, there are two beings whom the first great crime of my life made outcasts. To you can I commend them. Of one I know nothing, but, should you ever track her wandering steps, remember, Harry, it was I who made her the lost one she has become, and, for the sake of your old friend, pity, reclaim, protect her. The other, alas! will never need anything beyond what I have provided for her, in the miserable

existence to which I doomed her. Still, do not forget her. Oh, how that curse which I merited from her has come home to me! This is retribution indeed.

“Farewell, Harry, farewell; and may the only thought to mar the happiness of your life be that which must cling round the memory of

“Your affectionate Friend,

“FREDERICK COURTENAY.”

The hours of that day moved slowly on. Courtenay employed himself in writing directions on various subjects; one, of most painful interest to him, for it was the insuring of the permanent comfort, so far as was possible, of Mrs. Werther, and the securing of some provision for her daughter.

These matters gave him occupation for a time, and the comparative repose allowed a faint light to dawn upon his mind. The mist was clearing away, and the thought that he was about to do that which no imaginable consideration could justify—to commit the murder of himself or his adversary, was beginning to prompt that voice which

the storm of passion had overwhelmed—the voice of conscience, when the entrance of Colonel Vandaleur put to flight every messenger of peace. His cold, worldly language precluded the silent argument of reason, his allusions conjured up the fierce demon of revenge, and the faint soft voice was effectually stilled.

The morning dawned, calm and fair, with every prospect of a glorious day. Courtenay had thrown himself on his bed to seek an hour's sleep, but more with the hope of killing time and suppressing reflection than for repose.

For reflection would come unbidden. He had led a life of dissipation, of sin, but, although religion had been slighted, her advocate, conscience, had not been struck dumb, and there were forced upon his mind a retrospect and a future, which he could not shut out; he felt that his past life had not been a preparation for a future one. He knew, moreover, that no provocation could justify the shedding of another's blood; it mattered not what men might say, or think, or what imperious code of honour they

had written upon the commandment of God, thus making a mere palimpsest of his law—"Thou shalt not kill;" he had no right to send himself or his enemy to hell.

Thus in a state of restless and alternating feelings, with fevered brain and unquiet limbs, Frederick Courtenay had passed that night.

He was pacing the room when Colonel Vandeleur arrived; they shook hands. Courtenay's were hot and feverish, like the rest of his body, but when he came into the open air, a cold sweat spread over his frame.

They entered a carriage, and drove briskly through the silent streets. Colonel Vandeleur tried to engage Courtenay in conversation, but he was silent and moody; he had a haggard look, and his face was very pale. They passed through the city, and were presently away from the immediate vicinity of any habitation.

"That will do," said Colonel Vandeleur to the coachman, "draw up here, and wait till we return."

Colonel Vandeleur and Courtenay left the

carriage, and proceeded some distance to an open space partially surrounded with trees.

"We have scarcely kept our time," said the former, looking at his watch, "and yet they are not here."

A flush passed over Courtenay's face. "Will they come at all?" he said, with a hollow voice and sneering expression.

"Surely they will?"

Half an hour elapsed, and still O'Neill did not appear. The Colonel's impatience and vexation had become great, and Courtenay had more than once muttered the word "coward," when three figures were seen approaching. They were O'Neill, his second, a Captain Scholfield, and a surgeon.

The former stopped and turned round as his second advanced to meet Colonel Vandeleur.

"You have come at last, Captain Scholfield," was the Colonel's greeting; "it might be supposed you cared not to run the risk of being discovered."

"I am afraid we are late," was the reply, "but

my principal was not quite ready when I called for him."

"What! nervous I suppose; he looks so. He does not fancy the morning's work."

"He certainly says that Sir Frederick has little reason to expect him to be here at all, and declares he knows nothing whatever of Lady Courtenay."

"But," interposed the Colonel, "he does not deny that he left London with her."

"That he has neither denied nor admitted," replied Captain Scholfield. "I am, however, authorised by him to repeat that he does not know where Lady Courtenay is, and that he has not seen her out of England. Will you bear this message to Sir Frederick?"

"No," replied the Colonel. "I don't see that this statement alters the case; we have discussed it already, and I shall not withdraw my principal's demand for satisfaction. The sooner we have the business over the better. This spot will do admirably."

Colonel Vandeleur stepped the distance.

Courtenay had never stirred from the place where his second had left him. O'Neill still had his back turned.

The seconds loaded the pistols.

"Now, Dermod," said Captain Scholfield.

O'Neill started, and turned abruptly round, and took one of the pistols.

Courtenay had the other in his hand, and was already standing at one extremity of the ground marked out. His cheek was deadly pale; on his lip there was a contemptuous curl, and his eyes flashed fire as his antagonist approached with a slouching gait, and the appearance of one called to receive punishment.

The seconds withdrew—a moment more—the word was given, and both pistols were fired. Sir Frederick stood upright and motionless, but O'Neill staggered and fell.

Courtenay, with the others, rushed instantly up to him, and in the greatest agitation, he exclaimed "is he killed?"

The surgeon was on his knees in a moment

beside the prostrate man, displacing his dress to discover the wound.

As he lay there, it might be in the agonies of death, O'Neill turned his eyes on Courtenay with a look of intense hatred.

"Is he badly wounded?" asked Courtenay, in a voice of anxiety and sorrow; for his better nature was prevailing: "thank God," he added, "that he is not killed."

The surgeon was silent.

"I fear so," whispered Colonel Vandeleur. "The sooner you are off the better. Take my carriage, drive straight to the station. You shall hear how things turn out. Good bye: go, go."

The wounded man writhed in agony; his eyes rolled convulsively, and his features were horribly distorted. As the surgeon's hands touched him, he uttered a fearful imprecation which had scarcely left his lips, ere they became blanched, and, save that they still quivered, his whole frame was motionless—he had fainted.

The ball had struck the hip, and seemed to have injured the joint.

The surgeon and seconds carried Dermot to the carriage which had brought him, and they drove with all speed back to the city. O'Neill was still in a state of unconsciousness when they reached his apartments. In a short time, one of the most eminent of the many skilful surgeons of Paris arrived, and pronounced the wound to be a most dangerous and painful injury.

I will anticipate the result. Excessive inflammation and fever set in, and, for weeks, O'Neill hovered between life and death. At length, nature, aided by the highest skill and science, proved victorious, and Dermot O'Neill rose from his bed of agony—but a cripple for life.

CHAPTER X.

The most difficult province in friendship is the letting a man see his faults and errors, which should if possible be so contrived, that he may perceive our advice is given him not so much to please ourselves, as for his own advantage. The reproaches, therefore, of a friend should always be strictly put and not too frequent.

BUDGELL.

“Τὸ γὰρ ἂν Κάι Παθοι Τὶς ὅποτε Φίλος Τὶς ὦν Βιάζοιτο.”

LUCIAN.

ONE month has not yet elapsed since the recurrences recorded in the last chapters. The blow has been given, and with all the effect that revenge and vindictiveness could desire. The iron had entered Sir Frederick Courtenay's soul. Retribution too has begun its work.

When the rage consequent upon the discovery of the injury done him, the excitement of pursuit,

the madness of revenge, had passed away, Courtenay became fully and painfully conscious of his humiliation and disgrace.

Rumour was of course busy with her hundred tongues, and scandal fed her foul appetite on the exaggerated narrations which yielded many a newspaper paragraph, where names and places, not quite filled up, served to whet curiosity and stimulate conjecture, and which occupied many a fair hand in disseminating, and many eager lips in relating.

Like the different, though circumstantial accounts of the duel in the "School for Scandal," where one says pistols were the weapons, another swords, with the result, according to one, of "a bullet lodged in the thorax," according to another, "of a wound in the right side by the thrust of a small sword," while all differ as to who was the recipient of either bullet or small sword, the discrepancies regarding the late occurrences were marvellous. Even in those statements, which were not altogether false, each correspondent or

informant—as musicians ring changes on the original air—introduced variations *ad libitum*, and, for awhile, society was set agog to talk and comment on the faults and frailties of its lately so dear and honored members.

Sir Frederick's first thought was to shut up Lowick, and seek a congenial seclusion in some spot where the indefatigable foot of the English tourist would not tread, and where he would be safe alike from the impertinent stare of the stranger, and the irksome sympathy of acquaintances. Thanks to the locomotive propensities of our countrymen, such a place would, no doubt, be difficult to find, but Courtenay thought of the New, as well as the Old world—and ended by going down to Lowick and merely giving orders that he was not to be seen by anyone.

There was one, however, who shared his solitude, and who carried out the proverb to the letter, for he was “a friend in need.”

Montague immediately yielded to Courtenay's request to stay with him at Lowick, and he cheer-

fully subjected himself to the unequal temper, the deep dejection, the petulance, and moroseness of his friend.

Sir Frederick's domestic misfortunes were not the only annoyances which galled and irritated him. His abrupt disappearance from the racing meeting after the defeat of Fairplay, and his absence from England, were misconstrued by some into a flight from his sporting creditors.

Debts, called "of honour" are deemed, from their very insecurity, almost more binding than any others; but it sometimes unfortunately happens—and in the "Ring" there are occasionally instances—that there are individuals who do not limit their contingent liabilities to their assets, and who do not repudiate the last alternative in a run of ill-luck—to "*levant*." Two or three of Sir Frederick's racing creditors, applying to him their own code of ethics, deemed their honest gains in jeopardy, and made their demands in terms neither elegant nor measured. Sir Frederick had received letters from these worthies

and he was looking over them, as he and Montague sat in his study one day.

"Listen, Harry," said Sir Frederick, reading one: "'As report says you are about to break up your racing establishment; I should be glad to accommodate you by taking a portion of your stud in payment of what is owing to me on the —— meeting.' I ought to be grateful, Harry, to this very accommodating gentleman. Here is a letter, containing a threat of proclaiming me a defaulter. Well, that is straightforward and plain, any how."

"You had better let me try to come to some arrangement with these men," said Montague.

"Arrangement! Harry. The only arrangement I will come to with them is to pay them every farthing they can claim. Do you think I am going to crave time and mercy from them. That man is a rogue that makes a bet without the certainty of being able to pay it. I have been a fool to put myself in the power of such ——but I am wrong, there is —— and ——, as honorable men as ever lived. I will write to

them, and send them each a cheque for what I know I owe them."

"No, that will not do, Courtenay; if you pay one in full, the rest have a right to expect the same."

"And so they shall be paid, if I pawn my plate to do it. What! do you think I will put it into the power of my worthy correspondent here, for instance, to post me at Tattersall's, or point me out at Ascot or Doncaster as a defaulter, or one who has made a compromise with his creditors, and paid five shillings in the pound? No, no, Harry. But here, write to them all—I had better not do so myself—and inform them that I shall be ready to pay them all every farthing, if they will meet me at Tattersall's on the first of next month."

"But have you the money at your command, Fred?"

"No, but I suppose there are such people as lawyers, Harry, and such things of mutual benefit as mortgages, which those lawyers can effect. I've not been fool enough to put more weight

on Lowick than it can carry. So come, sit down, here are pens and paper, and send them a circular."

Montague was presently at work. Sir Frederick stood, and appeared lost in thought for a few minutes.

"I've a mind," said he, suddenly, "to let —— have Fairplay and the Telegraph filly at the price he names. No, that won't do. Here, give me a sheet of paper."

Courtenay sat down and wrote a few lines.

"Here's the finish to it all, Harry," said he. "I'll send this announcement to 'Bell's Life,' and the other sporting papers, to prepare the mind of the public; listen—'There will shortly be a sale of the entire racing stud of a gentleman declining the Turf' (that's the expression, I think), 'consisting of—' Bah, I must first see old Kirkley; for what with brood-mares, and yearlings, and all the rest of them, I hardly know what the stud of this gentleman consists of. The sale shall take place, though, and I will have done with the whole thing for ever. And now, Harry,

the next thing is to get the money. Will you go to town, and see Quilldrive about it?"

"Certainly."

"Tell him I must have it by the twenty-ninth. He may borrow it at four or five per cent., or higher, it makes little matter. Will you do this for me? I cannot bear to go up myself, I will add up all my liabilities, and let you have the total by to-morrow."

"Of course, I will do what you wish," replied Montague. "And I think you had better give me the commission to pay the money as well."

"What!" said Courtenay, "I suppose you think I shall lose my temper with one or two of my correspondents. Well, I believe you are right; you generally are."

Montague could not forbear reminding some of the creditors he met on the day appointed of the offensive language which they had used in their letters to Sir Frederick.

Of course apologies and explanations were numerous and ready; and it was wonderful how civil the tongue became as the hand received the

crisp bank notes, and how the recipients of them, one and all, averred that they always had and always should have the utmost confidence in Sir Frederick Courtenay's honour.

Beyond alluding in general terms to the sad circumstances which had lately occurred, Sir Frederick had never spoken of his wife. It seemed, however to Montague that there were reasons why the subject should not be suppressed. But the first time he ventured to speak of her, he received from Courtenay a decided, almost a rude rebuff. The topic seemed one too irritating, too humbling, too suggestive of self-reproach to be entertained for an instant. To renew the conversation would have been impolitic and useless; yet the subject was to Montague one of the deepest interest. Although he had not been a frequent guest at Courtenay's house, he had seen and heard enough of the progress of Sir Frederick and Lady Courtenay's married life to convince him that his friend had been very far from blameless in his conduct to his wife, and now, though he could not excuse the worse than

folly—the crime she had committed, he would fain have prevailed upon Sir Frederick to reflect that he who cares not to guard his treasure, can scarcely be surprised if it should be stolen, and that as a neglected, careless, dissipated husband, he had self-blame to acknowledge, as well as she deep remorse to feel, and humble sorrow to express.

There were also some circumstances preceding the duel, which seemed to Courtenay especially worthy of attention, as encouraging what might seem the bold attempt of extenuating Lady Courtenay's guilt, and among them, he remembered that O'Neill had distinctly declared that he knew not where she was. Although Sir Frederick had been too much blinded by rage and passion, and revenge, to heed the assertion, Montague could not bring himself to the conviction that it was a lie prompted by cowardice.

There was another consideration which had its full weight with Harry. Lady Courtenay was Mary De Lorme's sister; was not that argument enough to make him strive to the

utmost on behalf of the erring sister of her whom he loved so well?

Colonel Vandeleur had written often to Sir Frederick, and even yet his letters reported that O'Neill was still in a state of great suffering, and that his ultimate recovery was extremely doubtful.

And where was Lady Courtenay? Who had provided for her even the necessaries of life? Was she to be cast off as the vilest, the most abandoned of beings, as one for whom there was no excuse, no palliation of guilt? Was every chance of repentance to be shut out from her—no hope, no mercy to be extended, the lost sheep to be left to perish in the wilderness, no one to endeavour to bring it back to the fold?

That attempt Montague deemed it his duty—his privilege to make, and it needed not the painful sight of a father's deep, silent grief, a mother's agony, a sister's tears, to cause him to determine with or without Sir Frederick's sanction, to try to discover and win back to repentance and contrition the unhappy cause of so much sorrow.

Montague, therefore, one day, openly declared his intention to Courtenay.

“And I trust,” he added, “I may do so with your approval, Fred?”

Sir Frederick started, he seemed displeased, and exclaimed with bitterness:

“She has left me, Montague, why should I remember her? She has thrown from her every sacred memory of the past; I will cast her from me for the future.”

“Oh, Frederick!” said Montague; “is this like you; is this the part of a noble, a generous, though an injured man? What! shall it be said that upon others she is dependent for the very bread she eats!”

“If that is what you mean, command my purse, and make what arrangements you please, but never again—”

“Enough,” said Montague, “we will say no more.”

But the opening had been made, and Montague did not fail to take advantage of it; and conversations begun ostensibly for the purpose of con-

sidering merely pecuniary arrangements, sometimes took a different turn.

It was a delicate, but difficult task, this work of rare charity; Montague perseveringly urged every argument in behalf of one whom he did not deem as guilty as the world that threw the stones upon her; he besought Sir Frederick not to pronounce her guilty to the utmost without further proof; he dared to remind him of his own faults, his own provocations—how he had left her to herself, slighted her, exposed her to every danger; he bade him beware of aggravating and eternizing her crime, by barring all return from the evil path; he represented her the woman he had once loved in all the glorious beauty of her person, and varied vigour of her mind.

“Could you, Fred,” exclaimed Montague one day, “could you bear to look upon her, or even to know, that she was ill, abject, poor, suffering, perhaps, the extremity of sickness and pain, without even a servant beside her, without a creature to bathe her fevered temples, or moisten her parched lips, without—”

“Go, go, Harry,” exclaimed Courtenay, interrupting him, “go and seek her; do what is right—what you will: I am not fit to judge for myself now,” and he pressed his hands to his forehead in great and visible emotion.

Montague lost no time in acting on the permission given.

Lady Courtenay had been traced to Paris; that city, therefore, seemed to Montague the most likely place, if not to find her in, at least to furnish assistance in the search, and guide his future movements.

CHAPTER XI.

The first day pass'd—he saw not her——
The second—third.

BYRON.

“Le siècle a pardonné le christianisme à Saint Vincent de Paul ; on
a vu la philosophie pleurer à son histoire.

* * * *

Où la charité va-t-elle prendre toutes ses institutions, toute sa pré-
voyance !

* * * *

Nous avouons notre incapacité à trouver des louanges dignes de telles
œuvres, des pleurs et de l'admiration sont tout ce qui nous reste.”

CHATEAUBRIAND.

To Paris Montague went: and, immediately on
his arrival there, he endeavoured to discover
Lady Courtenay.

Although Colonel Vandeleur, in his letters to
Sir Frederick, had never given any grounds for
the surmise, Montague could not help suspecting

that Lady Courtenay might, from a motive of self-reproach, or justice to one on whom she had drawn such a chastisement, be tending the wounded victim of her folly.

He easily ascertained where O'Neill was. He was in private lodgings. With the utmost caution Montague sought to discover who had been his visitors: he found out who the occupiers of the house were, and he at last felt convinced that he had been mistaken in the expectation that Lady Courtenay might be watching beside the sufferer. He was assured that the only person frequently in Dermod's apartment was the officer who had acted as his second. From him Montague thought he might derive some information, and, as he was ignorant of Captain Scholfield's residence, he inquired for his address at O'Neill's apartments.

The answer was, that Captain Scholfield was at that moment in the house, but that he could not leave Mr. O'Neill immediately, as the invalid was worse.

Montague was therefore requested to wait,

and shown into an apartment. He very soon found that the room was next to the wounded man. Immediately after O'Neill was brought home wounded, he was taken into a room on the ground floor, to avoid the inconvenience of carrying him upstairs, and that room he had never left. The partition was very thin, and Montague could hear distinctly what passed.

"By Heaven!" he heard the sick man exclaim; "I will—I will get up."

"For God's sake," replied some unknown voice, "be quiet, you will do yourself harm, you will, indeed."

"I will go. Why do you keep me here?"

"You are ill, you know, you have had an accident."

"Accident be d——d. He shot me. Curses on him; I told him I had not seen her—I knew nothing of her—but he shot me, the murderer, he shot me like a dog."

"Hush, hush, be quiet."

"Why does she not come to me? Where is she?"

“She cannot come.”

“She cannot?—she will not, you mean; she leaves me here to die. But what does she care? She is as proud as Lucifer. She cared nothing for me. I knew that, and yet I was shot for her.”

“She is ill, Dermod, she cannot come.”

“Then I will go to her. I will go by ———, I will go; unhand me; oh! oh!”

There was a sound as of persons struggling, and then a moaning as of one overpowered.

This continued for a few minutes and then ceased.

The door of the room was soon after opened, and Captain Scholfield entered. He bowed to Montague, who immediately addressed him, saying—

“I have been an unwilling listener to what has passed in the adjoining room, Captain Scholfield; I presume I am addressing that gentleman?”

“Ah, poor fellow,” said the Captain, after bowing in acknowledgment of the name; “he

has just been suffering from a paroxysm, and one perhaps worse than usual. He has had a relapse and the fever has returned. I fear his chance of life is still anything but a good one. Sir Frederick's bullet must have satisfied him, if anything short of death could do it."

"Pardon me," said Montague, "but I could not help overhearing the words 'she is ill,' I presume they have reference to Lady Courtenay?"

"They had," answered Captain Scholfield; "I used them in the hope of quieting O'Neill. It is difficult to do so at times, for he refuses to believe any story I may invent for the purpose, and I have been obliged to own that I am entirely ignorant where she is."

Montague watched the speaker closely with the suspicion that Captain Scholfield might be intentionally deceiving him, but he could discover neither in his countenance nor manner any sign of deception or equivocation.

Montague was, in fact, so convinced of Captain Scholfield's sincerity, that he at once informed

him of the object of his visit; but the latter could only repeat that he was perfectly ignorant of Lady Courtenay's address.

"What adds to O'Neill's petulance and annoyance," resumed Captain Scholfield, "is that he has never seen Lady Courtenay since he left England. They parted before she went on board the steamer, and have never met since."

"Are you certain of that?" asked Montague earnestly.

"I have O'Neill's reiterated word for it. He was arrested at Folkestone, and so was prevented accompanying her ladyship. You are aware of that, are you not?"

"I became so only a short time since," replied Montague: "and you think he never joined her afterwards?"

"So he has assured me, both before and after the duel. There is truth in madness, too, sometimes, as there is said to be in wine, and O'Neill has repeated this more than once in his delirium."

Captain Scholfield little knew how great was

the joy that filled Montague's heart when he heard these additional proofs of his own kind opinion regarding Lady Courtenay. All that he had argued and said in her behalf, and said sometimes against his better judgment, had gained strength and confirmation, and hope with brighter rays cheered him to prosecute the search.

It appeared evident that Captain Scholfield could give no information respecting Lady Courtenay; and after hearing a few details of the illness of the wretched man in the next room, and of the agonies he endured, and still seemed doomed to suffer, Montague thanked the Captain—how heartfully—for the interview, and left the house.

He bent his steps homewards, revolving in his mind every scheme he could think of, practicable or impracticable, that might aid him in his search. He would enquire at every hotel—he would get a Directory and call upon every doctor and surgeon—he would search the hospitals. No, he would begin at the outskirts of the city—he

would return to the railway station, and try to ascertain what public carriages were in attendance there on that day, and at the arrival of the train by which Lady Courtenay had reached Paris. This seemed the most feasible plan, for it was starting from a point up to which Montague's information was sufficiently complete. Montague accordingly proceeded in the direction of the railway, choosing rather to walk than employ a carriage, in order that he might, on the way, reflect what might be the best method of conducting the inquiry.

As he went along, he saw, at some distance, one of those whose humble, pure and holy vocation it is to minister to the necessities of others, and in their acts to realize the loftiest combination of devoted charity and heroic courage; seeking out the deserted and neglected, supplying their wants, and praying beside their deathbeds; one of those who are not to be found in the courts of kings, in the halls of the great, amongst the noble, the beautiful, the rich, but one who, perhaps, had been herself all three;

but who had resigned her wealth, forgotten her descent, and sacrificed her beauty, and might be seen exploring the fever-infected street, and, with meek and downcast eyes, passing along the crowded thoroughfares, to visit the dwellings of the poor, the afflicted, the sick, the desolate—an angel upon earth—a “sister of charity”—a disciple of the great Saint Vincent of Paul.

She—or rather they, for, according to their regulations, there were two sisters together—were stopping at the door of a large plain house. It was their convent.

The thought struck Montague that it was just possible that one of the many “sisters,” with whose gentle ministrations Paris is blest, might have been called to attend Lady Courtenay if she had been ill. But, how improbable! No, it was useless to inquire, it was so very unlikely. And yet, he would not pass over even a chance like this.

So Montague crossed over the street, and asked the sister who opened the door if he might be allowed to see the lady who was at the head of

the community. The portress begged him to enter, and opened the door of a room near the entrance, saying that she would go for the superiororess.

Montague entered the room. It was humbly, scantily furnished; a table in the centre, a few plain chairs here and there, and on the wall a crucifix and a print of the founder of the order, Saint Vincent Reul, of Paris.

A few minutes elapsed, and Montague had already come to the conclusion that he was only losing precious time, and that he had better have proceeded direct to the railway station, when the nun he had asked for entered.

Montague, after apologizing for his intrusion, briefly told his errand, and by frankly alluding to some of the circumstances which had prompted it, endeavoured to excite the lady's interest.

That he did so was evident. She listened to him in silence, and then said she would leave him for a few minutes, and make inquiries among the community.

She was absent about ten minutes. "I am

sorry," she said, re-entering the apartment, "that I have not been successful in hearing that any of our sisterhood have visited a lady corresponding with the description you have given me. But if you will have the goodness to leave your address, I should know where to communicate with you, in case I might be fortunate enough to be able to assist you, though I fear such is barely a possibility."

Montague wrote down the name of the Hotel where he was stopping, and begging the Superioress to excuse the trouble he had given her, took leave of her with the hope that his future inquiries might offer more chance of success, and presently dismissed his interview with the nun altogether from his mind.

He continued his walk to the railway, and was speedily engaged among the officials, and the porters and cab drivers, in what seemed a more rational investigation than that which he had attempted at the Convent of the Sisters of Charity.

Still he could elicit no satisfactory information

and he returned to the Hotel, tired, dispirited, and annoyed.

As he entered it, a note was given to him. It contained the following lines :

“ Convent of the Sisters of Charity,
“ Rue ———

“ SIR,—At the time when I made the enquiries you requested among our community, some of the sisters were absent; I have interrogated these since they have returned. From the description one of them has given of a lady upon whom she has been in attendance, I think it not altogether improbable that she may be the person whom you are endeavouring to discover. If you will have the goodness to call at our Convent to-morrow morning between the hours of ten and eleven, you will be able to judge yourself if my conjectures are just or not.

“ Your obedient servant,

“ MARIE ST. BERNARD.”

Time lagged, and the hours seemed to stand still during that long evening, and Montague felt almost angry with the writer of the little note,

for having made it so brief, and not detailing her reasons for having excited his hopes.

At night, he lay awake, revolving impossible expedients and planning impracticable schemes, and his anxious mind carried on these speculations yet more fantastically in his dreams.

He woke and rose early.

Before the time appointed, he was at the Convent door, but he forced himself to walk up and down the street to put off time, till the hour named was at hand.

No sooner did he hear the first clock strike ten than he rang the house bell.

He was admitted as one who was expected, and was shown into the same room as on the day before.

Presently, the Superioress and another nun came in; and the former soon desired her companion to mention such circumstances regarding the lady she was attending, as seemed to confirm surmises.

"You will remember," she began, addressing the Superioress, "that on the —th of last month

you desired me to attend an English lady who was ill. When I arrived at her house, I found that she was in a state of great danger from inflammation of the lungs and high fever. The woman who had charge of the apartments told me that the lady had herself expressed a wish to have one of us to attend her; but, when I arrived, her mind was much affected. I do not remember what she said in her delirium, indeed I purposely avoided listening. She had no servant, and had arrived a day or two before. In appearance she was dark—for an English lady—with large brown eyes, and long hair. She must have been without money, for I was told that she had taken a ring off her finger from among several, which were very handsome and costly, and desired the attendant to sell it.

“She is not dead?” asked Montague suddenly, forgetting that it had been mentioned that the nun was still in attendance upon the lady

“No, no, Sir,” replied the nun; “she is recovering, but she is weak, very weak still, and she

scarcely speaks at all. I believe the exertion is too great, and gives her pain."

Courtenay reflected for a moment.

"I believe," he said, "that I could recognise her rings. You say that she has some that are costly and beautiful. Do you think you could show them to me?"

"No, Sir, that would be impossible; I would not touch one of them. Besides, she continues to wear them."

"At least," resumed Montague, "you could notice them, and tell me what they are."

"That is true, Sir; but diamonds are the same all the world over."

"Do you know the precious stones?" enquired Montague.

"I think so," answered the nun, and a slight blush tinged her cheek, and, involuntarily, she looked at her own hands, which, though tanned and brown, were very small. There were no rings on her fingers now, but perhaps she thought of the day when many a shining gem glittered upon them, for she was a member of one of the

best families of France. "I think I do," she repeated, looking up again.

"Will you observe, then, if there is a ring with four stones set in this order: one blue, the next white, not like a pearl though, but with fire in it, the two next green, the first of the two of a dull, the last of a bright colour, the initial letters of their names make an English word. It used to be worn on the third finger of the left hand, next to her wedding ring—she has that?"

"Yes, Sir; I have noticed it."

"If these circumstances are combined," continued Montague, "I shall have great hopes that the person I am in quest of is the lady you have been attending. But perhaps the ring I have described may be the one which she sold."

"No, sir; I think I heard that that was a diamond hoop."

"Then will you take notice of the ring I have mentioned."

"I will, Sir, to-morrow. I do not return to the lady to-day, I have other visits to make."

"You might also mention," suggested Montague,

anxious for additional proof, "some English names. Could you, in conversation, casually introduce either that of Montague or Courtenay? or—no, not that one—and note if there is any particular effect produced by hearing it,—a start or look,—any word or question?"

"I will endeavour to do so; but she speaks very little, it may not be easy to mention the names, but I will do so if possible."

"At all events, do not forget the ring with four stones."

"I will be sure to remember that," said the nun, retiring.

So far all was mere conjecture, and that founded upon very trivial grounds; and Montague left the Convent in a state of painful and tantalizing uncertainty.

Another day elapsed. How forcibly did Montague feel that which the old poet has thus so quaintly expressed.

"How slow the day slides on, when we desire
Time's haste; he seems to lose a match with lobsters.
And when we wish him stay, he imp's his wings
With feathers plumed with thoughts."

CHAPTER XII.

Foul is thy trespass, be thy tears not few,
Baptize thy spotted soul in weeping dew.

La première chose que Dieu inspire à l'âme qu'il daigne toucher véritablement, est une connoissance et une vue toute extraordinaire, par laquelle l'âme considère les choses et elle même d'une façon toute nouvelle.—PASCAL.

ONCE more Montague found himself in the Convent reception room—a very humble reception room, indeed—with a quicker pulse, and a more anxious heart.

He had walked across it more than once, and was again standing before its one picture, looking with his eyes, but not at all with his mind, at the kneeling figure of the Saint, when the door opened.

Montague turned abruptly round. It was

the Superioress, and a smile was on her kind, good face.

“Good morning, Sir,” she began: “you are punctuality itself.”

Montague bowed slightly, in acknowledgment of the greeting. “I never had more inclination or reason to be punctual,” he replied.

“I think we are right,” she said; “indeed we can hardly be mistaken. The ring which you described is on the lady’s finger, just as you indicated.”

“Thank God,” exclaimed Montague. “And were either of the names which I mentioned spoken of?”

“They were; and I am sorry Sister Agatha is not here to tell you the effect which the mention of them produced, but she has been obliged to go out. She introduced the names in talking of some English families she had formerly known; and she says that a strong emotion was perceptible in the lady’s countenance; it could not be mistaken, though, of course, the Sister pretended not to observe it. It even produced a violent fit

of coughing. But there was, perhaps, more good than harm done," added the Nun, smiling.

"Then I must go to her instantly," said Montague.

"But you must remember, Sir, that the lady is far from being convalescent, even yet; would it not be better to prepare her for an interview with you?"

"Then will you have a note conveyed to her from me?"

"It is an unusual office, and a strange one," answered the Nun, with a smile, "for one of us to be the bearer of a billet from a *preux chevalier*; but charity sanctifies all things. Yes, Sir, Sister Agatha will deliver your message or, note, whichever you like. She will be back soon, and then will go with it to the lady, if you desire it."

Montague asked for a sheet of paper, and wrote the following note:—

"Convent of the Sisters of Charity,

"Rue ———

"MY DEAR LADY COURTENAY,—I have but this

moment ascertained that you are in Paris, and have been ill. You will not refuse to see me, I am sure you will not. I bear messages from your father, mother, and Mary; they must be my passport.

“Pray send word by the Sister who is attending you at what hour I may call; and believe me, my dear Lady Courtenay,

“Yours most sincerely,

“H. MONTAGUE.”

An arrangement was made that Montague should call at a certain hour at Lady Courtenay's apartments, and receive from the Nun the answer to his note.

He did so, and when the servant came to the door, he requested to see the Sister of Charity.

She came, bearing a note from Lady Courtenay. It ran thus:

“My dear Mr. Montague,—By the mercy of God I am yet alive. He has saved me from death, and from a state of mind and soul worse than death. Come when you please. God bless you for seeking one who deserved not such a kind-

ness! Though I dared not write to England to ask for assistance, the hand of Providence has guided you to me, and you will even yet, I know, prove yourself the friend of one—undeserving, indeed, of that friendship—whose heart is well nigh broken, as her pen traces the name of Julia Courtenay.”

“Thank God!” exclaimed Montague—“her own hand-writing. There is no doubt now. Will you,” he said to the nun, “will you announce that I am here?”

The Sister of Charity returned up stairs, and presently came back with a request to Mr. Montague to go up: “but you must not stay long, nor talk too much,” she added. “This is the door of her room,” she said, knocking and letting Montague pass.

“My God!” he ejaculated, as he entered, for he was deeply shocked.

In a large arm chair, with a cushion at the back of it, sat Lady Courtenay, but oh! how changed! Where was the proud commanding look, the defiant step, the haughty carriage, the queenly beauty?

Pale, wan, thin, wasted, she rose not from her seat, but, as Montague entered, she clasped her white attenuated hands over her face. Then, with an effort and a painful heaving of her chest, she withdrew one and held it out, while she faintly uttered, in a whisper, "Oh! Mr. Montague, this is too kind of you; this is more than I deserve."

"You have been ill," said Montague, "very ill, I fear, Lady Courtenay."

At the mention of her name, the first time she had been so addressed since she had come to that house, a thrill ran through her frame. Then she raised her large dark eyes, in which all the fire seemed extinguished, so melancholy they seemed "I have indeed," she replied, "been very ill. Oh! if I had died! it is too dreadful; the thought makes me shudder."

"You are recovering, I trust."

"Yes, I believe so. But, Mr. Montague, my father, my mother, Mary, what do they say, what can they say of me?"

"Do not distress yourself, Lady Courtenay; remember, a parent's heart and a sister's are ever loving. I bear from them messages of love."

"Yes, yes,—but he—he—that I have been false to — ? And yet, Mr. Montague," and she raised her head, and the gesture was one of pride and truthfulness, though the voice was the voice of thankfulness alone: "guilty though I have been—madly guilty—though my stained soul is yet hovering on the brink of eternity, I solemnly declare that I am not the fallen being he must think me—you too—" and she humbly and shrinkingly lowered her eyes again, for there was a world of humiliation and self-abasement in those few words of vindication.

"No, no," replied Montague, eagerly; "believe me, Lady Courtenay, circumstances have already established your innocence in my mind; they will, I trust, do so in the minds of others."

"What circumstances?" she asked earnestly.

"The arrest and the positive declaration of—"

"Mr. O'Neill?" she gasped.

"Yes."

"Heaven be thanked! But tell me, Mr. Montague—I heard of the duel and the consequences—is he—dead?"

“No; he is recovering, though slowly.”

“Then I am spared that misery at least. And Sir Frederick? he was not touched?”

“No.”

“Oh! if he had fallen! It is too fearful to think of.”

She leant back in her chair, appearing to be exhausted, though a little flushed.

“If,” she continued, rising again, “if years and years of abject servitude, of the performance of the humblest offices, could atone—no, that cannot be—could attest the sincerity of my deep, my heartfelt sorrow; if, after years of difficult probation, I could hope to hear the one word ‘forgiven!’ But no, he will never see me again.”

She paused, as though struggling to keep down a very painful emotion; then, in a more quiet tone, she continued, “You came here to seek me, Mr. Montague?”

“I did.”

“Did he know of your journey and the object of it?”

"Yes; he bade me go and do all for your comfort that is possible."

"Then he did not—curse me?"

"Sir Frederick does not consider himself blameless," answered Montague.

"He is little to blame—mine, mine is the fault."

Then, subduing her feelings, she said, "You are returning to England soon, Mr. Montague?"

"Not till I have provided for your suitable maintenance and comfort."

"Talk not of that; I merit none. You must not stay. Leave me to reflection and repentance; I have need of both. When you return to England, bear to my father, and my mother, and to him, my humblest supplications for what forgiveness they deem can be accorded to me; tell him," and she raised up her magnificent eyes, in which the latent fire seemed rekindled, "tell him—I have sworn it—I am not sunk so low as he thinks me. To Mary, my gentle, dearest sister," and, for the first time, her eyes filled with tears, "bear, if she can receive it still, my most affectionate love."

"But, my dear Lady Courtenay," said Montague, himself affected, "I have no intention of leaving Paris at present."

"Thank you, thank you. I am still weak, and, therefore, if you are not going away, and will call again, I may be stronger—and might speak to you—more quietly."

It was with difficulty that Lady Courtenay uttered the last few words; her cheek had become deadly pale—she was fainting.

Montague hastily pulled the bell, and a servant and the Sister of Charity appeared.

"She is fainting," said Montague.

"Ah! Monsieur has remained too long," said the nun, rather reproachfully.

They busied themselves with restoratives, and, as soon as Montague saw that Lady Courtenay was recovering, he left the room.

With earnest thankfulness and deep thought he wended his way homewards. In truth there was ample subject for reflection on what had occurred since his arrival in Paris, and throughout all the strange circumstances of his search,

discovery, and interview, there was distinctly visible the guiding finger of Him "whose mercies are above all his works."

Montague employed the evening in writing to Mr. De Lorme and to Sir Frederick Courtenay.

In his letter to the former he refrained from declaring fully how ill Lady Courtenay had been, and how altered in appearance she was now; but he dwelt with earnestness on her changed and chastened character. To the latter he pictured, in strong and glowing colours, the real state of his repentant wife. After detailing the circumstances of his search for her, he drew a faithful portrait of Lady Courtenay, stricken with an almost mortal illness, in a small lodging, dependent in some measure on the pity and charity of others, asking for the humble ministrations of a poor Sister of Charity, and obliged to part with a ring from her finger to procure the necessaries of life. He spoke of her wasted form, of her yet precarious health; he insisted on her humble, penitent, broken spirit,

and its yearning for forgiveness: nor did he forget her sworn protestation of that partial and comparative innocence which he had already maintained, nor the confirmation of his belief in it which he had elicited in his interview with Captain Scholfield.

With a fervent prayer that Sir Frederick might receive his letter in the spirit he hoped for, he despatched it with a regret that several days must elapse before an answer to it was possible.

When the letter in reply came from Lowick, Montague opened it eagerly. Perhaps he expected too much, and therefore was somewhat disappointed at the tone of it. Perhaps he could not easily feel how the mind that had prompted the pen had been shaken, and how the writer's heart had been torn. Still it was kind.

"Do not leave her, Harry," it said, "till you have in every way provided for her comfort. It is late for me to be careful in this particular, but I would not willingly err in this respect again. Be careful to do to the utmost, Harry,

and accept my best thanks for your friendly exertions."

But there was no word approachig to forgiveness, and not many for self-accusation.

Montague remained about a fortnight longer in Paris, passing almost daily a considerable time with Lady Courtenay, who was slowly regaining her strength.

He was astonished at the change that had come over her mind. The deepest self-reproach, a longing for an opportunity of atonement, unbounded gratitude to the beneficent Being who had dealt with her so lovingly; a dawning, and a bright one, too, of religious feeling, had changed, as by a miracle, the cold proud unbending spirit that would have suffered any anguish silently with Spartan courage, and would have been shivered rather than yield. The change of mind and heart had been made evident even in her features.

Sir Frederick's first letter was succeeded by several others, and they evidenced a gentler disposition in the writer. In one, he made mention

of some jewels and some articles of dress which Lady Courtenay might wish to have. Montague called her attention to it.

“Never!” she exclaimed, “never more could I put on such memorials. Do not speak of such things, Mr. Montague. No, henceforth the weeds of mourning for me.”

She now, indeed, dressed entirely in black.

Montague spoke of her removing to a larger and more commodious apartment, and of providing servants for her, but she earnestly begged that at least for a time, she might be permitted to remain where she was.

One short letter from Sir Frederick, Montague allowed her to read. It was written without bitterness, rather in dejection. She took it eagerly, but her hands trembled, and her eyes were so dimmed with tears that she read it very slowly.

“Oh!” she exclaimed, “for one brief minute, before I die, that on my knees I may implore his pardon. But that consolation, alas ! will never be mine.”

“It may, Lady Courtenay,” said Montague.

“Had he been less careful for my future,” she replied, “I might have hoped; but all these arrangements appear so definitive, so cold, so chilling. Oh! my heart never knew what it was to feel till now.”

She one day alluded to her leaving London in company with O'Neill.

“I was mad,” she said, “I was possessed, I believe, not only with a demon of evil, but with the greatest folly. I had believed myself harshly undeservedly neglected, and pride, the pride which has ever been my bane, drew me into the snare. My eyes were blinded, and I cared not to open them. All I thought of was, how he would be humbled and disgraced, how I should be revenged, how all his high and dissipated friends would sneer at him. It is true that I had once liked, or thought I liked, Mr. O'Neill; but this feeling came from wilfulness and opposition, more than from any other motive, because at first I saw my fancy thwarted by my parents, and then because I was urged to marry

another, and my proud spirit never could bear to yield to that which my own will did not prompt. But even that liking had passed away, and I allowed Mr. O'Neill to remain as long as he did at Lowick, and to visit as constantly as he did at our residence in London, because he was attentive, and agreeable, and of service to me. As I live, it was no other passion than pride and revenge that made me take that fatal, that insane step of leaving my home."

"Pray do not revert to it again, my dear Lady Courtenay," said Montague.

But her mind seemed fixed upon the thought, and appeared to find relief in the expression of her feelings.

"How wrongly I have acted, how senselessly, too," she continued, "for a moment's reflection ought to have convinced me that such an act must injure myself more than any other person. But, Mr. Montague, the actions of women are generally prompted by the heart, not the head, and if the heart be ruled by passion, the follies we commit are terrible."

Lady Courtenay paused for a moment.

“My father and mother were wrong in obliging me to marry as they did. Alas! they have been grievously punished! They knew it was against my wish; Mary knew it too, and she, sweet child, besought me not to go to the altar, but my pride—that fatal pride again—after I had once given my consent, upheld me till the day of self-sacrifice arrived, and then nerved my lips to pronounce the words my heart belied.”

“Why, Lady Courtenay, did you not listen to your sister? But, pardon the question, for why look back with unavailing regret to a step which cannot be retraced?”

“It is true, Mr. Montague, that we see the path we ought to have taken when too late, and yet regret is wholesome if sorrow for the past corrects our actions for the future. The day passed,” continued Lady Courtenay, resuming the subject of which her mind was full—the theme of her remorse, of her self-accusation; “I was his wife—a wife in name only, for did I give him, did I try to give him my love, my devotion,

my submission? Oh, no! and then, at least, he was worthy of all these, but not a proud thought would I crush, not one motion of my own stubborn self-will would I check! Was he to be kind, generous, forbearing, and I repulsive, selfish, petulant? Lives there the man whose love would not cool by such a requital? No wonder he wearied of such a life—of such a companion. And when I saw that he no longer cared for my society, that I had thrown away the treasure of his affection, did I ever seek to win him back from associates that were hateful, from pleasures that were his destruction? No: in my false, selfish pride I wrapped myself—duty, conscience, religion, all were sacrificed to that hateful idol.”

The day before Montague was to leave Paris, he had as usual, passed some time with Lady Courtenay.

During the last few days, she had decidedly gained strength, although her weak voice, and the pain which she still felt, showed how deeply disease had fixed its fangs within her. Her countenance was pale, very pale, and seemed more so

from the contrast of her black dress, but she was composed, though the expression of her face was that of a settled melancholy.

“Before you leave me, Mr. Montague,” she said, “will you read this letter, and tell me if I may send it?” She drew a letter from a small portfolio. It ran thus:

“Sir Frederick,—With the earnest hope that you will not refuse to read these brief lines, I venture to write a few words, and intrust them to the kindest of friends, Mr. Montague. What those words should and must be is not doubtful; but I can find no expression strong enough for what I would fain convey to you, my humblest sorrow.

“Oh! that for one instant, I could communicate to you the reality of my deep grief, my aspirations for that pardon which I would deem cheaply earned by years of probation: I am not, believe it, Sir Frederick, I am not what I was: in every thought and feeling I am changed, thank God.

“If you can suffer to dwell in your mind the remembrance of one whom—shrink not—I believe you once loved, think not of her as of a being

utterly vile, despicable, abandoned. Whatever have been her follies, her faults, her crimes, she is not that; no, think of her, I beseech you, as of one whose life will ever be one of the bitterest contrition, a life she would fain wear out in the most devoted expiation.

“Treat not her memory with more harshness than must be. In solitude and grief her days will be passed, the remnant of that life which has been hitherto one of demerit, and which has been well-nigh brought to an end that makes her shudder; and, oh! that I could deem it possible! if, in the hour of sickness, of sorrow, of deep reflection, one heaven-born thought of pardon should flit across your mind, in mercy, shut it not out. For this I pray, and for your happiness that I alas! have so little thought of, so marred.

“I dare not write more; do not think it presumption in me to have written so much. I have spoken much and freely to Mr. Montague. I trust you will allow him to repeat my asseverations to you. Heaven is my witness that I have said nothing that is not most true; I have been

too near the grave—I feel hardly yet escaped—to dare a lie.

“For the kindness you have shown me through Mr. Montague, accept my humble but warmest thanks. May God in his goodness bless and protect you.

“JULIA.”

Lady Courtenay watched Montague as he read the letter.

“May I send it?” she asked, when she perceived that he had read it through.

“Certainly,” he answered; “and believe me, Lady Courtenay, I will not fail to be your advocate.”

Montague rose to take leave. “I must quit you now,” he said.

Lady Courtenay rose from her seat. “Farewell, Mr. Montague,” she replied, extending her hand. “Under Providence, you claim my warmest gratitude. How happy it would make me if I could ever prove its sincerity! that, I fear, is not likely; but, accept my thanks, and

believe that they are more heartfelt than I can express. You will not forget me?"

"Trust me, Lady Courtenay."

"I will, I know that I can. Farewell, may God reward you."

Montague was gone; and soon again Lady Courtenay was left in that thronged city without a friend, without one who knew her real name, with very few that were even aware of her existence.

Montague hastened back to England, and, without resting anywhere, went straight to Lowick.

Sir Frederick was a good deal agitated when they met. Montague was glad to find that Courtenay was attentive to the details which his letters from Paris had in part conveyed, and which he now more freely and fully repeated. Courtenay's irritation appeared subdued, his bitterness softened: he seemed no longer to shun that subject which, before his friend's visit to Paris, he could not bear to entertain for a mo-

ment, the extenuation of Lady Courtenay's guilt; on the contrary, he now listened to Montague with interest, even with eagerness.

Lady Courtenay could not have had a warmer friend, nor a more eloquent advocate; for none could be more earnest. His object was to bring back the repentant wife to the home of her scarcely less erring husband: neither could say to the other, "I have no forgiveness to ask, no fault to acknowledge;" guilt had not gone so far as to bar return—the characters of both were changed, and changing—what was there ridiculous or repugnant in the attempt? And yet Montague hardly dared to hope that such a pleasure, such a triumph would ever be his.

So he was fain to bide his time, though months and months sped on; and to hope even against hope.

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CHAPTER XIII.

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven,
Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes."

SHAKSPEARE.

"Thus I new marry him whose wife I am."

FORD.

"There are some fruits which must be punctured before they can ripen kindly, and there are some hearts which require an analogous process."

SOUTHEY.

THE setting sun was going down to rest beneath the broad heights bounding the domain of Lowick, again the autumnal tints were spread in matchless variety upon the deep woods that crowned their summits; again a "solemn stillness" hung

over hill and vale, forest and field, when a carriage passed through the lodge gates, and drove by the side of the broad smooth river, and then beneath the spreading boughs of the giant elms of the avenue.

The carriage was the same that, some years before, had been drawn by the willing arms of the peasantry, assembled to do honour to Sir Frederick Courtenay and his bride.

There were within the carriage, this time also, a lady and a gentleman.

The lady's cheek was pale and thin: she seemed in delicate health, and there were traces of suffering, mental as well as physical, upon that handsome aristocratic face.

"Oh! Mr. Montague!" she exclaimed to the gentleman seated beside her, "how can I ever thank you sufficiently for all that you have done for me? But no words could express my gratitude—no action of mine could ever repay you."

"It is enough that I should have been the messenger of glad tidings which we have both

prayed for," said her companion, "and that I have brought back to you the hope of happiness and peace."

"If," resumed the lady, apparently communing with her own thoughts rather than addressing Montague, "if I had died in that lodging, alone in that great city, where there was none that knew me, none that cared for me! My God!" and she clasped her hands, "thou hast indeed been merciful to me."

"Compose yourself, my dear Lady Courtenay," said Montague, for he saw that her cheek, which had been so white, was now flushed, and that in her eyes there gleamed an unnatural brightness, almost a wildness: "compose yourself; we are approaching the house; you are almost at home."

"At home," she repeated, taking up the words; "yes, there is still a home for me. O, God of mercy, thou art good!"

The carriage drove over the smooth gravel to the hall door. Montague stepped out and bade the servant not ring the bell.

Lady Courtenay, trembling and agitated,

leant upon Montague's arm. In silence they crossed the hall; Montague softly opened the door of Sir Frederick's study, so softly that he scarcely could have heard it, but, as the handle turned, Courtenay rose from his seat,—his wife was on her knees, her beautiful face bowed humbly down, but it was only for a moment—before Montague could leave the room, they were locked in each other's arms.

It is not meet that there should be a witness to that sacred scene—the marriage of the hearts of those two erring beings, which had never been solemnized till now.

Lady Courtenay's father and mother, and sister were also at Lowick, and on earth, as in heaven, there was "joy over the repenting sinner."

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The mind of man is strangely capable of undergoing a complete change. Its plastic nature seems able to take the impress of any mould that associations, example, chance by events, passions by their stimulants, may apply

to it; as a white, and apparently homogeneous ray of light is, by its transmission through a prism, refracted into distinct and dissimilar colours, so the human character, by being submitted to the influence of circumstances, shows itself in features imperceptible before, and exhibits phases, of which the very existence was unknown and unsuspected.

Lady Courtenay, and in some degree also, Sir Frederick, were examples of this.

Both had passed through a time of evil, of suffering, of humiliation; the pride of both had been brought low; the mild, still voice of conscience had been heard; the light of religion had at length been descried through the mist of indifference and the stormy clouds of passion; and each of them must have been well nigh a deist not to have seen and acknowledged the hand of Providence throughout that dark and fearful time.

Of course it was soon noised about that Lady Courtenay had been received by her husband at Lowick, and the "Lady Teazles," and "Lady

Sneerwells," and "Mrs. Candours," of society, were soon busy with them both.

The certainty that Lady Courtenay's return, with all that might have led to it, was diligently discussed and philosophized upon by those charitable individuals, was no doubt calculated to annoy Sir Frederick and his wife. Nevertheless, there were considerations and feelings which very much diminished their annoyance, and chiefly perhaps among them were the consciousness which both felt that they had done what was just and right, and the strange new growth of affection which had sprung up in the hearts of those two altered beings.

Between Sir Frederick and Lady Courtenay there seemed to be a tacit agreement that the past should no more be reverted to, that the faults which each had avowed justly forbade mutual reproach, that reparation was called for from each, and that the practice of gentleness and forbearance, kindness and cheerfulness, devotion and love, should be the means of making that reparation. Thus it was that they steeled

their hearts, not proudly—but more than philosophically—against the voice of censoriousness and sarcasm.

The Courtenays chose to remain in retirement.

It was likely that they should do so; independently of other motives, Sir Frederick's affairs required attention, and called for the retrenchment of undue expense, and Lady Courtenay's health was very delicate. Necessity, therefore, as well as inclination, kept them at home.

The charms of Lowick had never yet been fully appreciated; but that delightful place seemed now, each month, to invite its possessors to fresh enjoyments in proportion as the artificial attractions of society were disused and disregarded. Each summer had been hitherto chiefly passed in London, but now in the beautiful gardens, the still beech woods, the calm, clear river, Julia Courtenay saw and felt delights which neither the ball-room nor the opera-box could afford, and she began to wonder how those whose lot has been cast among such sylvan scenes could barter

them for the polluted air, and the less healthful amusements of London.

An additional link was granted to Sir Frederick and Lady Courtenay to unite their hearts still closer. There were hopes that a son might be born to them to continue their ancient name.

Courtenay redoubled his attentions to her. Instead of mingling with the gay throng at Ascot or Goodwood, he might have been seen walking slowly with her in her favourite place of exercise, the sunny terrace walk, her arm resting on his, or driving her in a low pony carriage among the cool woods, or beside her in the boat floating down the still bright river.

"Oh! Frederick," she would sometimes say, "this is happiness indeed, a happiness I never dreamt of."

More she dared not utter, for any attempts at self-reproach, Courtenay would affectionately check with such few words as—

"Julia, Julia, when will that busy meddling memory of yours be quiet?"—Or, more gravely thus: "You make me sad, Julia, when you cause

me to think how much I have to answer for, how much I am in arrear of kindness and care."

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The day—the day of joyful sorrow—came; and oh! delightful to all, to the suffering mother, to the anxious father, to servants, dependents, to all; a son was born to the house of Courtenay.

And a fine healthy babe he was; and he throve and waxed stronger and bigger week by week; but Lady Courtenay regained her strength very slowly.

How carefully and lovingly did her husband tend her, sitting with her for hours as she rested upon the sofa; sometimes reading to her, or, when she went out in the grounds, walking by the side of her wheeled chair.

When at length she was able to stroll out for an hour, how thankfully she trod once more upon the shaven sod, how multiplied and welcome, and fresh were the pleasures that met her at every step, as she walked among her flowers and shrubs, or went to feed the beautiful proud birds

that on the wide fish ponds, as "on still Saint Mary's lake," were wont to "float double, swan and shadow."

During those hours, when no one intruded on their privacy, she would speak to her husband, as Julia Courtenay never spoke to him before, of religion, practical religion.

Sir Frederick Courtenay was naturally gifted with strong and right principles, but the course he had run for years had insensibly led him from the path of religion till all practice of it became neglected, and what he retained was merely speculative and theoretical. To win him back to an earnest constant practice of it, had long been the ardent wish and the daily prayer of the changed wife.

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On a bright spring morning, while the birds were hymning forth their praises, and the flowers were opening their painted petals to proclaim the wonders of the Hand that made them, before the altar in the small domestic chapel at Lowick, Sir Frederick and Lady Courtenay knelt down to

perform that act, the neglect of which bars from her gifts and benefits the children of their church.

What gratitude, what gladness filled Julia's heart!

And when, after their united prayers and thanksgiving, they left the hallowed spot, scarcely had the chapel door closed behind them, before they were clasped in one long fond embrace: and though tears, tears of mingled emotions, of joy and tenderness, and hope, and peace, and gratitude, suffused the softened eyes of Julia Courtenay, a smile played upon her lips, as she murmured upon her husband's bosom, "now, Frederick, I think I could die happy."

"Talk not so, dearest," said he, as he drew her still closer to him, and kissed her high pale brow, "talk not so, you are better and stronger far than you were."

"Yes, Frederick, I am stronger; but you know I never feel really well. If I should be spared to be happy with you for some years, I shall be very thankful; but even if my life be not pro-

longed, I still have cause to be grateful for untold, unthought of joys."

"But, my dearest Julia, care and time are all that you require. You are tired with rising earlier than usual, and a little excited, too, perhaps: come, we will go into the house."

Lady Courtenay's health had certainly improved, but the seeds of disease which the cold shower, whilst she was on the deck of the Folkestone steamer, had sown in her constitution, had never died away, and she felt that they never could be eradicated. To them had been owing the almost mortal illness which had prostrated her in the lodging in Paris, and germs of them still existed, which the slightest indisposition might fully develope. Her lungs had been pronounced to be affected, and a cough, which never entirely left her seemed to her like the warning voice of the angel of death, constantly reminding her that the thread by which her life depended was weak and fragile indeed.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Now, good, my lord, give me the scope of justice.
Let me have way, my lord,
To find this practice out."

SHAKESPEARE.

"Such men associate, and each other aid
Till all are guilty, rash, or desperate made."

CRABBE.

THE Castle of Iveragh had become more lonely than ever; its possessor more repulsive and morose.

A funeral train has proceeded from its gates; again Mr. O'Neill is a widower.

Sudden and overpowering was the disease which struck Dermot O'Neill's scheming mother,

and short was the time she had for shrift or repentance.

Her son had been neither long nor often at Iveragh since his first departure from it. His father's coldness had grown into antipathy, and he did not care to conceal it. There was nothing to entice the young man to his home, or to attach him to it, and he had continued to live an unsettled, roving life, wandering from place to place, without honourable occupation or object, and, not unfrequently, in fear of arrest for debt, as the uncertain remittances from Iveragh failed, or the fortune of the gambling table proved adverse.

The circumstances of his duel with Sir Frederick Courtenay had first become known to his father through the public papers; since then the father and son had not met.

The effects of Dermod's severe wound and long illness were permanent, and, partly from the assurance of his medical advisers that the climate of England would be prejudicial to him,

partly to keep out of the way of his English creditors, he had remained upon the continent.

When his mother was seized with her sudden illness, he received a letter from his father to summon him to Iveragh.

It gave him little hope of seeing her alive, and even his cold, selfish heart was deeply shocked. He started immediately; but, although years even had elapsed since he had received the fatal bullet which crippled him, he was still so little able to bear any unusual fatigue, that he was laid up before he had made more than a short journey, and when, at length, he reached Iveragh, the funeral had taken place some time before.

Dermod was struck with his father's altered appearance; time, and care, and disappointment had blanched his hair, and bowed his head.

A common grief will often unite hands long severed, and infuse warmth into hearts distant and cold, but the meeting between Dermod and his father was as that of strangers. Although

Dermod walked with difficulty, his father hardly appeared to notice his lameness, or the traces which illness had left upon his countenance. Mr. O'Neill did not once allude to the injury his son had received; he spoke but little of his own bereavement, and retired to his own room very shortly after Dermod's arrival.

The following morning he did not join Dermod at breakfast, but soon after the latter had finished his meal, he received a message that his father wished to see him in the study.

As soon as he entered it, Mr. O'Neill, without salutation or welcome, rang the bell and desired the servant to show in Mr. Gartlan, his legal adviser.

In the room was a number of deed and manuscripts; some small drawers, too, which seemed to have been taken from furniture not in that apartment, were half, some quite full of letters.

"Take a seat, Mr. Gartlan," said Mr. O'Neill, as the solicitor entered. He did not repeat the

same invitation to Dermod, who remained standing.

"You may imagine, Dermod," began Mr. O'Neill, looking at his son in a cold and searching manner, "that, since the death of your mother, I have thought it my duty to look through her papers. She had the habit of preserving most of her correspondence, and, among the letters which I have noticed, I have discovered one very remarkable indeed. Look at the address upon this letter, Dermod: do you know the handwriting?"

"I do not think that I do," was the answer.

Mr. O'Neill took back the letter, and opened it. "Now," said he, handing it again to his son, "look at the signature."

"Dermod held the letter near the window, as if to examine it more carefully, but stood with his back to the light, and his face turned a little from his father. "It is a very good imitation of my own," he said, calmly.

"Give me the letter back," said his father. "Now, listen to the contents of it, and tell me

truly, Dermod, if your hand wrote them or not."

Mr. O'Neill then read the very letter which contained the details of the death of his brother's wife, and of the birth of her child in Miles Dogherty's hostel.

He now and then paused, as though expecting some admission or denial from Dermod, and at those times fixed his eyes inquiringly or searchingly upon his son's countenance. Dermod continued silent, and his countenance bore so exclusively the stamp of suffering and illness that, under any circumstances, it would probably have given little indication of what was passing within his mind.

Mr. O'Neill read the letter to the last word, though not without his voice becoming at times tremulous and weak.

He paused for a moment, after slowly repeating the signature, "Dermod O'Neill."

"Now, Dermod," he said solemnly, "I ask you again, was that letter written by you or was it not?"

"It was not," replied Dermod.

"Mr. Gartlan, you have heard my son's denial; will you now be so good as to leave us?"

The lawyer rose from his seat, and left the room.

"Dermod," said Mr. O'Neill, "you have denied that the letter which I have read and the signature in it are yours, and yet I am convinced that you are deceiving me, and that you did write it, and that the truth is contained in that letter. Time, place, circumstances, the writing, are all evidences against you. And yet I will not condemn you till I have sifted the matter farther. It was but yesterday that I discovered the letter, and, therefore, I have not yet sought to prove its truth except by your admission. Believe me, no endeavour shall be spared to do so. If, therefore, the letter is yours, I implore you, for your own sake, if not for mine, and for that of your brother's child, deny it not."

"Perhaps, Sir," replied Dermod, "I may be able to show you that this has been an invention for the purpose of injuring me."

"A strange one, indeed."

“May I beg you to allow me a reasonable time before you take any farther steps in the matter?”

“I do not know if, in strict justice to another, I am justified in delaying the inquiry even for one day; but, that you may have no cause for complaint, I will do as you request. But, Dermod, if after a certain time you are still without the most complete and convincing evidence that this letter is a forgery, by Heaven! I will cast you from me as I cast off him that is no more, my poor boy.”

And the father stopped, for the thought of his lost child overcame him, and he bowed his head though he wept not.

Awhile, and he looked up, and motioned to Dermod to leave the room; and the grey-haired mourner was left alone to his sad and bitter reflections.

Dermod's was a desperate game. How could it be played! How prevent the damning evidence of those who witnessed the occurrences which he had recorded in the letter, which had

thus risen up in judgment against him, even through the mother who had never scrupled to abet him in his heartlessness and injustice?

Dermod was a thorough believer in the omnipotence of money. Without it he had no chance: he might make liberal splendid promises, but what were they worth in comparison to a handful of gold? Money he must have and that immediately.

He paced his room in sullen and angry thought, his mind so occupied that he forgot his lameness, till the prolonged motion caused a severe pain in the wounded joint.

"Curse that Courtenay," he exclaimed, as he sank with an expression of pain into an arm-chair, "he has marked and marred me for life. Ah! the thought is a happy one." He referred to a pocket almanack. "Yes, I shall be in time."

Dermod then drew a portfolio from the centre of the table, and wrote the following note to his father.

"SIR,—The startling imputation which I

heard this morning, for the first time, leaves me no alternative.

“Although the hurried journey which my anxious desire to pay the last tribute of respect to my departed parent caused me to undertake, has proved too much for my impaired health, I cannot allow personal motives, or indeed any other motive, to induce me to submit for a day more than necessary to such an aspersion.

“By the time this note is in your hands, I shall be on my way hence, and unless illness should stop me, I trust, that, before very long, I shall be able to bring convincing proofs that you have, though unintentionally, inflicted a great injury upon

“Your dutiful son,

“DERMOD O’NEILL.”

Half an hour sufficed for the re-packing of his portmanteau, but the exertion of doing so, joined to mental agitation, made Dermod feel faint and sick. A draught of a stimulant or cordial revived him; he rang the bell, and desired the servant to take down the portmanteau and order the carriage.

As he stepped into it, he gave the note to the servant, bidding him deliver it to his father, and he was soon hurrying away from Iveragh.

* * * *

The reader of these pages has probably never penetrated into any of the dens of vice, and misery, and infamy, and crime.

“ The private courts,
Gloomy as coffins; and unsightly lanes.”

Which, though hid from the public eye, thickly stud the length and breadth of our metropolis.

It boots little to say where that locality existed to which I would now, in imagination, transport him. From a street which, at the time of its erection, might have been considered a sufficient and perhaps ornamental thoroughfare, running through one of the most densely populated districts of London, diverged a narrow passage, somewhat resembling those close unwholesome cuts which, in some towns, bear the appellation of “ Wynds,” or “ Chares.” At right angles to this a low open stone doorway led to a small

court or square, surrounded with houses of no inconsiderable height. A water course, or open drain, choked up with decaying vegetables and offal, dispersed its foul exhalations in the centre of it, while the corners were cut off by low walls so as to form receptacles for ashes and the refuse of the houses. No sanitary inspector seemed to have invaded this spot, in which cholera, and pestilence, and fever might fitly have established their head-quarters and congress.

Within a room, on the second story of one of the houses was a party of men sitting round a table, upon which there was some jugs and some thick glasses, while two or three women occasionally peeped in and out.

"Dick's a long time coming home to-day," said one of the men, "I hope the blue beetles haven't nabbed him."

"Not they," said another: "I'll wager a ned he'll come safe enough, with his gripers full of fogles, and, may-be, a ticker or two as well."

“Where was he going?”

“Jem and he were off to Swell Street together. I shouldn’t wonder if they get a twitch or two half full of neds or flimsies. Dick’s as sharp as ——; here they are.”

At this moment one of the individuals whom they were speaking of opened the door, thrusting his head forward. He was a boy who from his height could not be thought more than nine or ten years old, though his set features and their strongly marked character betokened an addition of four or five. His face was thin and sharp, and his countenance exhibited an expression combining cunning, cruelty, and vice.

“Well, young area-sneak,” said one of the men, “have you come home without your pal? where’s Jem?”

“He’ll be here presently. He’s just stepped into a crib not far off, and he bade me come on and get something ready to eat.”

“Hallo, Sue,” shouted one of the men, “here’s Jem and Dick come in. They’ll want something to sluice their bolt with too. Come in, Jem,”

he added, as a youth about the same age as the other entered. "I'll fake the rubber, so step across to the boozing ken, Sue, over the way, and get us a noggin or two of lightning. Here, take this, I'll engage you haven't a tanner with you, and let the boys have something to eat—none of your cag-mag though."

The woman departed, and presently returning placed on the table a jug and two more glasses, and then set about getting something with which to pacify the appetite of the two boys.

"Here, Jem," said the principal speaker, "take the snicker and see what the stuff is like; blow me if they didn't send us yesterday some beggarly stuff worse than all sorts. Have you any news of Tom Hardy?"

"Why, they say," replied Master Jem, "that Tom's not unlikely to show off at Tuck-up fair. I hear he's about done for one of the blue-bottles that fadded him. You know they hobbled him yesterday, but I suppose he'll be in the stone jug a good while."

"Well," said another of the men, "if poor

Jem is scragged I wouldn't like to be in the shoes of the one that chirped."

While this conversation was going on, a figure, closely muffled, and enveloped in a large cloak, passed down the street, and, turning up the passage I have mentioned, went on through the low archway, and entered the court.

A dirty, slatternly girl was emptying the water from a large iron vessel, in which she had been washing some potatoes.

"Does one Sandford live here?" asked the person going up to her.

The girl looked up with a suspicious air, and then answered with a strong Irish accent:

"Faix, an how will I know; but an ye'll ax at the door forenint ye, ye'll may be find out."

"Come," said the man who had addressed her, "we are all friends here, so you need not be afraid to say."

"Divil a thing I know," she replied impudently, and at the same time she tossed out the last remnant of the water from the iron vessel, and went into one of the houses.

The inquirer walked up to the doorway of the house, where the men and boys were eating and drinking, and rapped with his stick against it.

A woman presently came to the door, and asked what he wanted. He repeated his question, and she retired, merely desiring him to wait.

"Surely," thought he, "I have seen some one very like that figure!"

She was tall, with a dark, sallow complexion, large, handsome eyes, but a melancholy and rather sullen expression of countenance.

Presently, a man came down stairs, and, as he seemed to be the man sought for, the woman was probably thought of no more by the person who had addressed her. She had descended the staircase again, but was concealed by the burly figure of the man who had preceded her; she had, at least, not been perceived again, and had passed into the room she had at first come out of.

"Can I see you alone for a few minutes, Sandford," said the cloaked figure, removing his wrapper a little, so as to show his countenance.

"What's to hinder?" was the reply. "This crib ain't as public as a boozing ken; come in here."

He opened a door, and led the way into a room; there were only a table and a wooden chair or two in it. The floor was damp, and a close, unwholesome smell pervaded it. There was an inner door a little ajar, which the man kicked to with his heavy foot.

"You know me, Sandford," said the new comer, throwing back the high collar of his cloak.

The other man nodded.

"Sandford, have you a mind to help yourself to a little money?"

"Well, I can't say the flimsies are so plentiful now-a-days, that I should object."

"There may be some danger, but you're not the man to care for that, and I can help you to a good sum."

"Let's hear how to come at the swag, d——n the risk."

"I must have half the booty; I want some money."

"Come, I'm to stand the risk of the stone jug, the floating college, the lumber lags, or a hempen neckcloth, and you are to bank the rag! No, no, I'm not to be chiselled that way."

"I said you might keep half of the plunder."

"And why not the whole? If I run all the danger, why should I keep all the swag."

"Very well: then you'll get it as you can, and when you can, I sell my information."

"Well, there's something in that. They'll be real neds? Any need of the fence or the melting pot!"

"It is money, and plenty of it will be gold and silver."

"Well, then, I don't mind if we do snack the bit. You give me the information and I'll let you in for the riglars."

"I wish you would drop that confounded slang, and talk like a Christian. Here, just reach me that chair, I can't stand any longer; curse him!"

There is no need of continuing the dialogue.

Sandford could not speak a sentence without drawing largely on his slang vocabulary, and my readers are probably neither adepts in such a language nor ambitious of acquiring a knowledge of it.

A plan was then proposed by the man in the cloak, by which Sir Frederick Courtenay's house was to be entered the night after the rent day, and the money abstracted, together with what other valuables there might be found.

The house was minutely described to Sandford, and it appeared that the burglars would have every facility for their enterprize.

Two days were to intervene, during which Sandford was to engage such help as was necessary, and make the requisite preparations. He and his associates were to retain half the plunder, the other half was to be made over to the projector of the robbery, who would remain, concealed in the neighbourhood of Lowick.

The bargain being thus concluded, the stranger drew his cloak closer round him, and went away as he had come.

"Why, Sal, what makes you go out at this time?" said one of the men to the tall dark woman who had first encountered the stranger, and who now had on her bonnet and shawl, and was leaving the house not long after his departure.

"What's that to you!" was the reply: "can't one leave this cursed den without asking your leave?"

"Well, Sal, you mum your dubber pretty generally, but when you do slacken your glib you may as well do it civilly."

The woman made no answer, but left the court.

CHAPTER XV.

“ I found
This paper thus seal’d up.”

SHAKSPEARE.

“ Was a sordid soul
Such as does murder for a meed;
Who, but of fear knows no control,
Because his conscience, sear’d and foul,
Feels not the import of his deed.”

SIR W. SCOTT.

THERE was among the letters which awaited Sir Frederick Courtenay at the breakfast table, one morning, one which he read more than once in silence, hardly knowing whether to consider its contents as written in jest or in earnest. It ran as follows:—

“SIR FREDERICK CCOURTENAY,

“ I have reason to know, and I write

this letter to inform you that your house at Lowick will be broken into on Thursday night, in order to obtain possession of the money which will be paid on your rent day.

"Do not treat this letter with neglect, but be prepared.

"It matters not who I am. It is sufficient that my information is correct, and seek not to know more of the writer."

The letter was written in a female hand, and the writing and spelling were both good. It bore the London post-mark.

The De Lormes happened to be at Lowick, but the ladies had not yet entered the breakfast-room.

"Read this note," said Courtenay, handing the letter to Mr. De Lorme, "and tell me what you think of it. It contains a startling piece of information, if true, and but a sorry joke if meant as such."

"I think there is cause for alarm," said Mr. De Lorme, returning the letter: "at all events, there is no harm in being prepared."

"That," said Courtenay, "I think may be easily done. I can muster a good force."

"Perhaps Julia had better not remain in the house," suggested Mr. De Lorme.

"All the ladies might very well pass the night at the steward's house," replied Courtenay.

Mrs. De Lorme and Mary now came into the room. Lady Courtenay had caught cold, and did not come down stairs.

The two ladies were made acquainted with the contents of the mysterious note, which they began to canvass with Sir Frederick and Mr. De Lorme.

"I wonder," said Mary, "whom the letter can come from? It is evidently written by a female hand."

"Well, Mary," said Courtenay, "I am not aware of numbering among my female friends, any who move in the society of burglars."

"Whether it is a hoax or not," said Mr. De Lorme, "I suspect it is a forged hand. You know how cleverly some people can imitate any kind of writing,"

"Can you not think, Sir Frederick," resumed Mary, "of any fair acquaintance in what are called the humbler walks of life whose interest in you is so great as to induce her to watch, unnoticed, over your welfare?"

"No, saucy one, I cannot, indeed."

The party remained longer than usual in the breakfast room, discussing the letter, and the conclusion they came to was, that, at all events, measures of safety should be adopted.

Mrs. De Lorme went upstairs and told Lady Courtenay of the letter.

"I think, Julia," she said, "that you had better leave home at least for a night or two."

"No, mamma, I really will not. Frederick will remain, and I should be imagining all sorts of horrors if I were at any distance from him. You and Mary can go, but I am quite resolved to stay. I am sure I shall be neither frightened nor nervous."

Lady Courtenay's resolution not to leave the house at Lowick was too strong to be overcome,

and she imparted so much courage to her mother and sister, that they agreed to remain also.

Sir Frederick secretly took every precaution to provide against a surprise. It was easy enough, among the tenants who crowded to pay their rents, to introduce a sufficient number of police in plain clothes, and arms and ammunition enough to stand a seige, and repel any attack, however desperate and well organised.

The night came. The whole household had apparently retired to rest; the lights were extinguished—the shutters closed in every room, and all things wore the usual appearance of repose and quiet.

Two of the police were concealed in the study, which was supposed to be the most likely place for the burglars to attempt the entry of the house; there were others in various rooms on the ground floor, while the servants, and a few of the tenants, who had been asked to remain to increase the force, were ready in the passages to unite in any place where an alarm should be given. There

were even some placed in the vineries, prepared to intercept retreat, and the old butler took his station in the servant's hall, within arm's reach of the cord communicating with the great bell, ready, at a second's notice, to sound the alarm to the whole neighbourhood.

About midnight, a low grating noise was heard in the study, followed by a crackling sound. The burglars were cutting out a pane of glass. They then tried if the shutters were open. They were fast, so they commenced sawing a hole in them. The wood was oak, and the saw made very little progress. "D—n it," said one, "you'll be all night. We shall have the jockeys going to their work before we are clear off. Where did he say the clinks and gobsticks were?"

"They'll be down stairs," was the answer from another man. "I'd rather have the neds though; we should have to hide the others till we could get them off to the melting pot fence."

"There now, that's big enough for the boy. Now, Dick, off with your hock-dockeys. Give him a shove."

"D—n it, you've made it a tight fit: why couldn't you not give him another inch or two?"

"Oh! it'll do—there—now hand up the dockey—be quick."

The boy had now squeezed and drawn himself through the hole, and contrived to slip down noiselessly into the room on his shoeless feet. He then took the dark lantern and unfastened the shutters, and lifted up the window.

The two burglars then got in, and immediately commenced their operations.

"Come, Bill, you crack that peter," said one, pointing to a chest, "while I frisk the drawers. Here, give me the jemmy, they seem plaguy strong."

"D—n it, Dick, you've not doused the glim!"

"All right," said that young gentleman, throwing the light of the lantern in front of the burglars.

"Here's the swag," said one, "but there's d——d little of it. There must be more elsewhere, or we'll have to look after the clinks, or it won't pay."

Both the men were now bending over the drawer, in which some money had been purposely left, and Master Dick was holding the light close to it. Suddenly, the two policemen rushed upon them, calling out loudly for help.

The struggle was only for a moment. In an instant the room was filled with an overwhelming force, and the two burglars and the boy were secured and handcuffed.

The old butler had not even the satisfaction of ringing the great bell; and some one went to tell him that the burglars were already captured: so the old man presently appeared on the scene of action.

"Why! bless me!" said he, as he pushed through the crowd, and stood confronting the prisoners, "is that you, Jacobs? Can I believe my eyes?" he continued, holding a candle full in the face of the man, who, in another place, has been called Sandford.

"Get out of that, you old fool;" said the burglar, surlily, "do you want to burn my eye-

brows off?" and he nearly knocked the candlestick out of the old man's hand.

"Bless me! Jacobs, has your poaching brought you to this?" continued the old butler. "See, Sir Frederick, here's a pretty return for my poor master's kindness; rent forgiven, doctor's stuff sent. Ah! old Jacobs brought up his children badly, but I never thought to see one of them handcuffed for breaking into Sir Dugald's house."

The garrulous old man shook his hand at the rough burglar, and wound up his invective with "For shame, Jacobs, for shame."

The arrest had taken place so quickly that there was very little noise or disturbance, and although Lady Courtenay and the other ladies had not slept, they had no cause to be alarmed or agitated, and there was no enquiry for *sal volatile* or smelling salts.

In a few hours the burglars were safely lodged in the gaol, to take their trial at the approaching assizes.

CHAPTER XVI.

It cannot be ! and yet he must be looked to.

* * * *

This man

Must be watched.

BYRON.

How oft has the Banshee cried.

MOORE.

Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanealed.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE scene shifts for awhile. It is one wild and magnificent, the handiwork of nature, and but little that of man.

A valley, wide and deep, is bounded by mountains, gradually spreading out in massy black wastes, on which may be seen, at times, some of

the few scattered inhabitants of the district wending homewards with a "creel" of "turf" upon their backs. Here and there, laid bare by the industrious excavators—as the grave digger turns up the bones of generations past—appear the relics of a by-gone era, huge blocks of black oak, telling strangely that all that vast region, now unbroken by tree or shrub, was erst a primeval wood; or, mayhap, there have been discovered the gigantic horns of the elk inhabitants of that submerged forest, centuries ago.

Here, from the spongy, shaking ground, to pass over which the foot must step from tussock to tussock, may be flushed the startled snipe, springing suddenly up with a wild scream, and uneven flight, till he mounts, circling higher and higher, and is lost in the clouds; there, from a hole half-filled with the dark purple peat water, rise with discordant noise, the gaudy mallard and his mate; there, at a greater elevation, may be seen the bloom of the heather; and, higher still, on the mountain's brow, are flung the shivered fragments of the slaty rocks, thence no plant draws

nourishment—and, piercing through these, upheaved by some convulsion, ages upon ages it may be ere man trod this earth, or living creature of strange, uncouth form moved in the scarcely separated elements, the granite forms the lofty summit; and, perchance, on some peaked pinnacle, as on a watch tower, sits, in gloomy solitude, the monarch of birds.

In the valley, lies slumbering a lake, so black and still that it looks like a huge plane of polished ebony: beside it are the mouldering ruins of an ancient priory, and, at a little distance, one of those strange plain structures which so long puzzled the antiquarian—a round tower.

Beneath the grey mouldering walls of the priory, sleep those who lived and died within them, and the old churchyard is even yet the last resting place of the laborious inhabitants of that district, who, for centuries, as each generation passes by, have been laid beneath the shadow of its giant yew tree, that

Cheerless, unsocial plant, that loves to dwell
Midst skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms.

It was in this valley, that was heard one day, borne on the "whispering wind," from the single bell that swayed above the humble chapel, the summons to the poor people around to assemble on its cold, damp, naked mud floor, there to kneel before the God of their forefathers, whose piety, and faith, and constancy had won for their native land the appellation of the "Island of Saints." Thither the peasantry were wending their way; and on road, "bochlen," and path—the latter lying, at times, on those large dykes, or as they are misnamed "ditches," on which so much labour and space have been thrown away—might be seen many a frieze coat, and many a long blue cloth cloak and hood.

Those who lived in the few cottages around it had occupied the interior of the little chapel, but there was not enough accommodation for all who came to unite in their Sunday's worship, and numbers were compelled to remain outside its walls.

The bell had ceased: and within and without the chapel all bowed low on bended knee; and

no sound nor murmur broke the stillness of prayer and adoration.

There was a traveller then approaching; and he had perceived these people gathered round the chapel, but without any sympathy with their humble guileless thoughts.

The road passed close to the chapel porch. The traveller was alone in a gig. "Is this," said he, drawing up, "the road to ——"

The man he addressed raised his head from the hand which one knee supported, and turned round to answer. A female, enveloped in a large blue cloak, was kneeling beside him: she, too, turned round as the wayfarer repeated the question.

"Jamesy," exclaimed the woman, in a low voice, or rather whisper, "it is Mr. ——"

"Whist, darlint," said the man who knelt beside her, and who was her brother, "whist."

"It is," replied another man, who had heard the traveller's question; "keep straight past the round tower, and take the turn fornint the ruins to the left."

The traveller drove on.

The woman who had uttered the first words, bent down as in a sitting posture, and, drawing her hood over her head, remained quite still.

The man beside her had grown very pale. His eyes followed the gig and its occupant till they reached the turn which took them out of sight. Then he became restless, and uneasy, and shifted from knee to knee, turning his head round in the direction the traveller had taken. He paid little attention to his prayers. His thoughts were elsewhere. They took him back to days long past; they recalled days of comfort, of humble joy, of thriving industry, a season of disappointment and disaster, a tale of supplication, before a hard man, a scene of eviction and desolation; and his own wrongs and the deeper wrongs of the loved and honored father, whose heart a proud, unsparing landlord had broken, aroused the darkest passions of his soul.

The service was scarcely concluded before he touched his sister's arm.

"Let us go home," said he, in a low hoarse voice.

The woman wrapped her cloak closer round her, and they departed.

"I'll dog his steps, the murdering villain," the man muttered between his teeth, "I'll watch him, the thief o' night; he's up to no good."

Meantime, the gig had proceeded until the traveller reined in his horse at the door of one who appeared for awhile in one of the earlier scenes of this tale—Miles Dogherty.

The worthy man had become somewhat stiff and rheumatic, and kept closer to the turf fire in his kitchen than had been his wont. So, when the gig stopped before his door, the courteous host did not, as was once his custom, appear, in order to welcome the wayfarer.

The traveller inquired of the lad who filled the not very arduous or responsible situation of ostler, if one Miles Dogherty was living there, and, receiving an answer in the affirmative, he bade him take the horse out of the shafts and give him a feed of corn. He then stepped down from the

gig, but appeared to do so with some pain or difficulty, and, as his foot touched the ground, he winced and shrunk from the pressure.

There were three or four beggars collected near the house. An old crone came forward and put out her withered hand with the usual whine for "charity for the lone widder." But a surly order from the traveller, "stand out of that and let me pass," provoked the old mendicant to say, as she moved back a step, "sure it wouldn't be amiss if yer heart was as tinder as yer feet."

"But one penny among us, yer honor," said another.

"I've got no pence," was the reply.

"Troth then," observed a third, "an the siller was more convanient to yer honor's fingers, it ud be the hoight o' bad manners for the likes of us to be taxing you for the pince."

The traveller took no notice of the remark, and perhaps did not hear the laugh which it produced; and went into the house.

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Nearly a month had elapsed from the day when

Dermod left Iveragh. Mr. O'Neill had never received any intelligence of him, and he was beginning to entertain the suspicion that a consciousness of guilt had prompted his son to forsake his home, and that he should never see him, and might probably never hear of him again, when a letter arrived, charged with a dreadful tale.

On that day, the old housekeeper at Iveragh was seated, with a fellow-servant, in her own small room that she had occupied for nearly half a century.

"I knew it, I knew it," exclaimed the old woman. "I hard her the other night, an' I knew well enough that we'd be after losin one of the old stock. It was the Banshee, Gandsey."

"You've hard her before this time, Mrs. O'Leary, have you not?" asked her companion.

"Fifty-one years," replied the old woman, with earnestness and solemnity, "have I sarved in Iveragh Castle, an' many's the change I've seen, but in that time I've hard her twice afore this, an' twice has death visited this house, not the

house neither, for Masther Charles" (and the old woman's eyes filled with tears) "lies —— but the heavens be his bed, though the salt water sea has covered him this many a year."

Mrs. O'Leary paused, and then said slowly; "the Banshee niver desaves. An it isn't to many that the Banshee comes with her warnin'. No, no, to none but the raal ould stock of Ireland, Gandsey. Rich, an' proud, an' grand, they may be, but niver a Sassenach did she mourn for."

"When was the other time, Mrs. O'Leary?"

"Before that. My dear misthress—'tis the masther's first wife I mane, Gandsey, an' a more beautiful cratur mortil eye never rested on—my dear misthress had been to see a poor woman, an' on her way back, a heavy shower came on an' wet her, and she caught a heavy cold. She took to her bed, an' she never left it alive. Well, Gandsey, she had been gittin worse, just droopin' like, day by day, an' a few days afore she died—may the angels guard her sweet spirit—I was sittin' up at night, in case she might want somethin': I

felt sleepy, an' to rouse myself, I got up an' walked to the winder, an' looked out. It was a fine clear night, an' I stood watchin' the light of the moon upon the sea, an' after standing by the winder some time, I came back to my chair. Presently, I hard, close, close to the very winder, a long, low moan. At first, it was very low, then it grew louder, as though the throuble was stronger upon her—for it was the Banshee, Gandsey—an' I hard her clap her hands, an' she wailed louder an' louder, an' she was by the winder keenin an' cryin for a long while. I need not tell you, Gandsey, that, before the week was out, my poor misthress was a could corpse."

"It's very strange, Mrs. O'Leary."

"Troth, an' you may say that, but it's not more strange than throe. I hard her again before we got the news of the shipwreck; but that time it was a loud, sharp cry, the same as the other night, as though she was struck, an' cried wid the pain an' fear. When you hear the keenin' of the Banshee, Gandsey, you may take yer oath there's a sorrowful day near."

"Will the masther bear up again this, Mrs. O'Leary? It's a big sorrow, intirely."

"There's but one left now," said she, not appearing to heed the question. "He's seen them all go before him, wife an' child, kith an' kin, an' it's, may be, a warnin' voice for him that I've hard, as well as the wailin' for his child. What did you say, Gandsey?"

"How does the masther bear up agin the bad news?"

"I think, Gandsey, the feelin' must have been bate out of him wid his griefs. He doesn't seem to understand it. He showed me the letter, an' axed me if it raally meant what was written. Heaven presarve us, Gandsey, I'd betther go up to the masther again, for there's no sayin' what grief may drive him to, for all he seems to be so quiet."

With these words, the old servant left the room to attend to the master she had served in joy and sorrow for nearly half a century.

There had been an inquest held in Miles Dogherty's inn.

The body of a man was brought in, found dead by the roadside, shot through the heart.

From some letters or cards found on the person of the murdered man, it was ascertained that he was Dermod O'Neill, and his father was immediately apprised of the awful event.

The corpse was laid in the room where Fanny O'Neill breathed her last, and where her lonesome, friendless, orphan boy first saw the light of the world which was to him a desert.

Among those who were examined upon the inquest was Miles Dogherty. Dermod and he had had two interviews; the first upon the day of his arrival, when he merely spoke to him on the ordinary topics that a traveller might choose; but on the second he had said that he wished their conversation to be confidential, that he had then hinted at the birth of the child which had taken place in his house, and had asked him if he had any recollection of it. "Is it," continued Miles in his evidence, "that I remimber it, you're axin' me?" sais I. 'Faix, an' I've not grown ould enough, an' stupid enough, to have

forgotten it. I'm not such an omadhaum as ^{that}; for all that I'm not so handy wid my feet as I was, I've no cause to complain o' my memory. I do remimber it, yer honor,' sais I.

“‘But,’ sais he, ‘Misther Dogherty, it's a mighty long time since, an' it's hard to spake positive of things that have happened years ago.’

“‘It's not so long,’ sais I, ‘an' I can spake positive of it. I mind the lady stoppin' at the door; an' I mind the wife—God rest her sowl—biddin' Kathleen, that's my daughter, rin and fetch ould Nancy M'Dermott; an' by the same token, I mind, when the poor cratur' was at her warst, there was a carriage drew up to the door, an' a jintleman that was in it had dinner and a bottle o' claret—it was a bottle o' the raal sort, but it's all been gone this many a day—an' he sat eatin' and dhrinkin' all as one as though there was a dance, and not death in the room over his head, an' the women spakin' an' wailin' in the passage; I mind the babe, too, that Mary Falvey took an' rared; ay, yer honor, I mind it all.’

"Then he sais to me—

" 'You say, Misther Dogherty, that your wife is not livin' ?'

" 'She is not,' sais I, 'yer honor.'

" 'An' yer daughter,' sais he; 'is she still here?'

" 'She is not,' sais I, 'for it's five year or more sin' she left, wid her husband, for Americay.'

" 'An' Nancy Mc'Dermott?' he axes.

" 'Och ! bless you!' sais I; 'ould Nancy was past seventy then.'

" 'An' Mary Falvey?' he goes on.

" 'Both she an' her husband are lyin' in the churchyard,' sais I.

" Whilst he was axin' these questions, I seed a smile come over his face, an' he kep' clink clinkin' the silver an' gould in his pocket. An' two or three times, he took out some sovereigns, an' passed them from one hand to the other.

" 'Then,' sais he, 'you're may be the only one in these parts that remimbers these things?'

" 'Well,' sais I, 'I don't know but what I may be. What wid the churchyard, an' Ame-

ricay, an' Australy, an' them furrin' parts, there's not a dale of us remainin', but I knew there was plenty more than me that minded all about it; but it seemed so strange like, that the more he found out were dead an' gone, the better it seemed to plaze him.

“‘Then,’ sais he, ‘Misther Dogherty,’ he was mighty civil-spoken intirely, ‘it’s a quare business, an’ mighty ’nlikely to have happened any one. Still there are some people always ready for meddlin an’ pryin’ into other folks’ affairs, thim lawyers ’specially. Now the young man isn’t in these parts, an’ most likely he’s dead?’

“‘Well,’ sais I, ‘it’s thrue enough he’s not here, for he tuk it into his head to emigrate; but I wouldn’t go for to say that he’s dead.’

“‘Well, well,’ sais he, ‘nobody knows. Anyhow, it’s no use to be disturbin’ people wid quare stories. Them lawyers is such meddlin’ folk’, that if they had hould o’ sich a story, they’d be for searchin’ an’ rummagin’, an’ would never rest till they’d got half a dozen families by the ears.

It's no joke neither,' sais he, 'to be had up to court in a witness-box, Misther Dogherty, an' the judge and jury, an' the counsel, an' the 'tornies, all axin' you questions, an' botherin' you about your oath, an' threatenin' yer wid what they call contimpt of coort:—yer never was in the witness-box, Misther Dogherty?'

"'Niver,' sais I.

"'It's no joke,' sais he. 'An' I tell you, Misther Dogherty, in confidence, mind, it's not onlikely you'll be axed by one of these smooth serpint-tongued fellows about that same child, all for the purpose of turnin' out the rightful possessor of a property, an' one of the raal ould stock, for an upstartin' murtherin' villain; an' I can tell you, Misther Dogherty,' sais he, passin' the gould again, 'that you'll not be forgotten if you have a hand in preventin' such villany; an' the best way ud be to say that you know nothin' about the matter. But,' sais he, rising up, 'I shall be glad to spake wid you to-morrow.'

"Wid that, he walks off as fast as he could, an' that wasn't very fast, for he was lame, while

I stood thinkin' it was a quare business. An' that night he was killed, an' I never heard the sound of his voice agin."

The reader will have filled up for himself this outline of Dogherty's narrative, and will have understood that Dermod's departure from Iveragh, his visit in the burglars' house, the intended robbery at Lowick, his arrival at Miles's hotel, had but one object, that of endeavouring to nullify the evidence of the letter which he had written to his mother. He will have imagined also, that Dermod had resolved, should he fail in this attempt to crown his deeds of injustice, to return no more to his father, but to leave Iveragh and Ireland for ever.

Dermod has been fearfully interrupted in the completion of his scheme, and, with his mind full of his deep designs, he has been hurried by an unknown hand, to where no ingenuity will avail, nor plotting succeed.

CHAPTER XVII.

Weakness possesseth me and I am faint.

SHAKSPEARE.

Nature sets her gifts on the right hand and on the left . . . There are goods so opposed that we cannot seize both, but by too much prudence may pass between them at too great a distance to reach either.

DR. JOHNSON.

THE indisposition which had confined Lady Courtenay to her room on the morning when Sir Frederick received the warning letter from his unknown friend, had proved far more serious than had been anticipated.

She had, however, struggled through the more alarming phases of her illness, but the great debility from which she still suffered gave those around her cause for much anxiety.

Her sister had been her constant nurse and companion, and would scarcely leave the bedside or sofa of the dear invalid, unless desired to do so.

Lady Courtenay had one morning insisted that Mary should go out for a walk while the day was fine. "To employ me in your absence," she said, "I will read the account of the trial of the men who broke into Frederick's study, if you will bring me up the paper from the library. He tells me the report of the trial is given to-day."

Mary presently appeared with the newspapers and laid them down beside her sister.

Instead of looking over the local paper, that in which Sir Frederick had read the account of the trial, Julia took up another. She turned over its large pages, and, as will sometimes happen, one word—it was a name—caught her eye. She looked to the heading of the paragraph: it was "shocking murder," and, after some details, she read the concluding statement—that from various letters and papers found on the person of the deceased—whose life had evidently not been sacrificed for plunder, as his watch and his money were un-

touched,—there was no doubt that the murdered man was the son of Mr. O'Neill, of Iveragh Castle.

When Mary returned from her walk, she found Lady Courtenay extremely agitated.

“My dearest Julia,” said Mary, “what is the matter? How wrong I was to leave you!”

“There is an account in the London paper of the dreadful murder of a person I—once knew—that has quite unnerved me,” replied her sister.

“When Sir Frederick comes in, ask him to come up stairs to me.”

Mary at once sent a servant to bring Courtenay home; he was not far from the house, and, in order to lessen the alarm which the message would be sure to cause, she remained in the hall to receive him.

“What is the matter?” he asked, approaching, flushed and excited.

“Do not be alarmed,” she replied, “something in the newspaper has frightened and agitated Julia, and she wished to see you when you came in, so I sent for you; that was my doing, not hers.”

“You did quite right, Mary.”

“Well, dearest Julia,” said he, entering his wife’s apartment, “Mary tells me you are not feeling well: what has disturbed you?”

“Did you see the London paper this morning, Frederick?”

“No, I was in a hurry to go out, and only looked at the other. What is there in it?”

“You will not wonder, Frederick, I know, nor chide, because I feel shaken and agitated. Look at this paragraph, and read the sad end of one, we, alas! have known too much of.”

Sir Frederick took the paper from his wife’s trembling hands, and read the statement of the murder.

“Good God!” he exclaimed, “how dreadful!” But these were his only words, and then he stooped down, and, kissing his wife, bade her compose herself.

But the agitation and excitement had exhausted her, while it brought on fever and restlessness, and those around her began to fear still more

that Lady Courtenay would not be spared to them much longer.

Mrs. De Lorme was sitting one day beside her daughter's bed. Lady Courtenay's cough had been more than usually distressing during the night, and had chased away the sleep which strove to rest upon her heavy eyelids.

She had remained for some time silent and still, and her mother thought at last she was slumbering, when she heard her low weak voice saying, "Mamma, are you there?"

"Yes, my love, but I was in hopes you had fallen asleep."

"I am not sleepy now, Mamma, but I feel so weak and subdued."

"You have had a bad night, you know. It is rest that you require, and if your cough would allow you to sleep more regularly, you would soon regain your strength."

"If it would," replied Lady Courtenay, with a faint smile; "but I know it never will. Mamma, I feel that I cannot recover; and now that I am

able, I should like to talk to you on a subject which is of great interest to me."

"My dear Julia, you are low and nervous to-day. You have only to take care of yourself this spring, and the warm weather will make you quite strong again."

"No, Mamma, do not let us deceive ourselves: I shall never see another summer. And now I want to speak to you about Mary. Why! oh, why, Mamma, will you still refuse to give your consent to her marriage with Mr. Montague?"

"My dear Julia, it would really be letting your sister throw herself away. Do you know that she might have married Lord Ravensclint?"

"Yes, but she did not like him."

"I suppose not."

"Then why was she to accept him? Mamma, Mary and I were hardly ever separated, day or night, until I married; I know her disposition, her character, better, perhaps, than even you do, and I know her too well to think that she can ever be happy with a husband she does not love.

I can answer for it that Mr. Montague and Mary were attached to each other long before he ventured to ask for her hand."

"I do not at all question their mutual attachment."

"With the utmost delicacy and unselfishness, Mr. Montague, I know, would not ask from Mary a positive engagement, lest he might mar her prospects; but between them there has long been an unspoken promise as binding in the heart and mind of each as any solemn protestation."

"Mr. Montague is, no doubt, an excellent, amiable man, and very clever, and likely to rise in his profession; but surely Mary may look higher."

"I do not disparage the advantage of riches, but it has often seemed to me, of late, that there is something in the very dependence on each other of those who are not affluent which is an earnest of happiness—might I not even say a cause of their happiness? If it were not so, what

would become of the poor? their lot would be hard indeed."

"But, Julia, it really seems not doing justice to Mary to allow——"

"Mamma," resumed Lady Courtenay, interrupting Mrs. De Lorme, and speaking with a voice of earnestness and emotion, "was it not enough for one of your daughters to make what the world calls a good match? Did that make her happy and virtuous? Do not expose Mary to the danger which proved so fatal to me. I am speaking frankly and freely, and I own that when I married Frederick I did not love him—you know it—I never did love him till he took me back to his arms, in his mercy and kindness, an altered, chastened being. How well I know now what a woman should feel when she plights her troth and love before God's altar! Mamma, do not, I beseech you, forget my example, and do not any longer bar dear Mary's happiness."

The agitation which these few earnest words had caused brought on a violent fit of coughing,

and, for that day, Lady Courtenay was too much exhausted to continue the conversation.

But she resumed it on the next, and again pleaded for her sister. Nor was Mary's happiness the only motive for her exertions. To Montague, Lady Courtenay owed and acknowledged a boundless debt of gratitude, and, though she felt that she could never repay it, she deemed the best way to prove her thankfulness was to plead for, and promote the union of her sister with her friend, though he was but a younger son.

Gratitude, then, as well as love, made her importunate and persevering; and at length with success.

For one day, after a sleepless and feverish night, Julia felt more than usually worn out and enfeebled. And sending for her father and mother, she bade them mark how changed she was, how thin, and pale, and weak; and she besought them, by the love they bore her, to grant the one only request she would, probably, ever make to them.

"Papa," she said, "I am dying, and it is

worse than useless that either you or I should deceive ourselves any longer. A few more nights such as the last, and I shall be too weak even to speak to you. Am I not myself the best argument I can offer to persuade you to give your consent to Mary's union with Mr. Montague? For you thought you had chosen well for me, and that years of happiness and splendour would be mine. How much of the former have I enjoyed? Its commencement dates only a few years since. How much of the latter awaits me? A funeral procession is all."

Her parents were deeply affected. Tears were in their eyes, and they were silent.

Lady Courtenay raised herself up, and, taking a hand of each, she continued—

"Papa and mamma, hear me for a few words more. It has pleased God that the order of nature should be reversed, and that I should learn before those that gave me birth what are the feelings which arise from the approach of death. Among the strongest is the conviction of the folly of mere worldly wisdom. Is it not that

which makes you still withhold your consent? Oh! let me have the consolation, during the short time that may yet be mine, of thinking that I have secured the happiness of my beloved sister; and, my dear papa and mamma, believe me, you will think as I do when you are near the grave. Papa, will you grant the request of your dying daughter?"

"I cannot refuse you, my child," sobbed the father, now completely overcome. He stooped over her, and kissed her affectionately, and then the tearful mother clasped the wasted form of her child to her bosom in a long and agitated embrace.

"Come," said Mr. De Lorme to his wife, "let us leave Julia and send Mary to her. Julia has the best right to announce her triumph."

Long, and sad, yet sweet, was the interview between the sisters; and, when at length, Mary tore herself away from the beloved invalid lest she should do Julia harm by remaining longer with her, her eyes were red with weeping, but

in her heart there was a struggle between joy and sorrow.

That same evening Lady Courtenay wrote a note to Montague asking him to come to Lowick as soon as he could, if possible, the next day.

He did so, and almost immediately upon his arrival, Lady Courtenay sent to request him to come to her apartment.

Mary was already there, sitting as usual beside the sofa on which her sister was resting. As Montague entered the room, an expression of joy rose upon the pale cheek of the invalid. In her eyes gleamed a bright but unnatural effulgence, and, as may be observed sometimes, in those in whom the bonds of the soul are being loosened, there was that in her countenance which seemed not "of the earth, earthy," but borrowed from another world; her very face seemed becoming spiritualised.

With a sweet and cheerful smile, she extended her thin, white hand to Montague.

"At last," she said, "Mr. Montague, I may

hope that I have done something to show my gratitude to you. Come here, Mary," she said to her sister, who had risen from her seat, and Julia taking her sister's hand placed it in Montague's, and held them joined between her own saying, as she did so, "my father and mother, Mr. Montague, have given me the right to act as I am doing, and, in anticipation of a holier rite which I may not be spared to witness, to place the hand of my darling sister in that of my most valued friend. I do it in all truth and confidence, believing that I am ensuring the happiness of you both, and in that happiness securing for myself a pledge that I shall not be forgotten."

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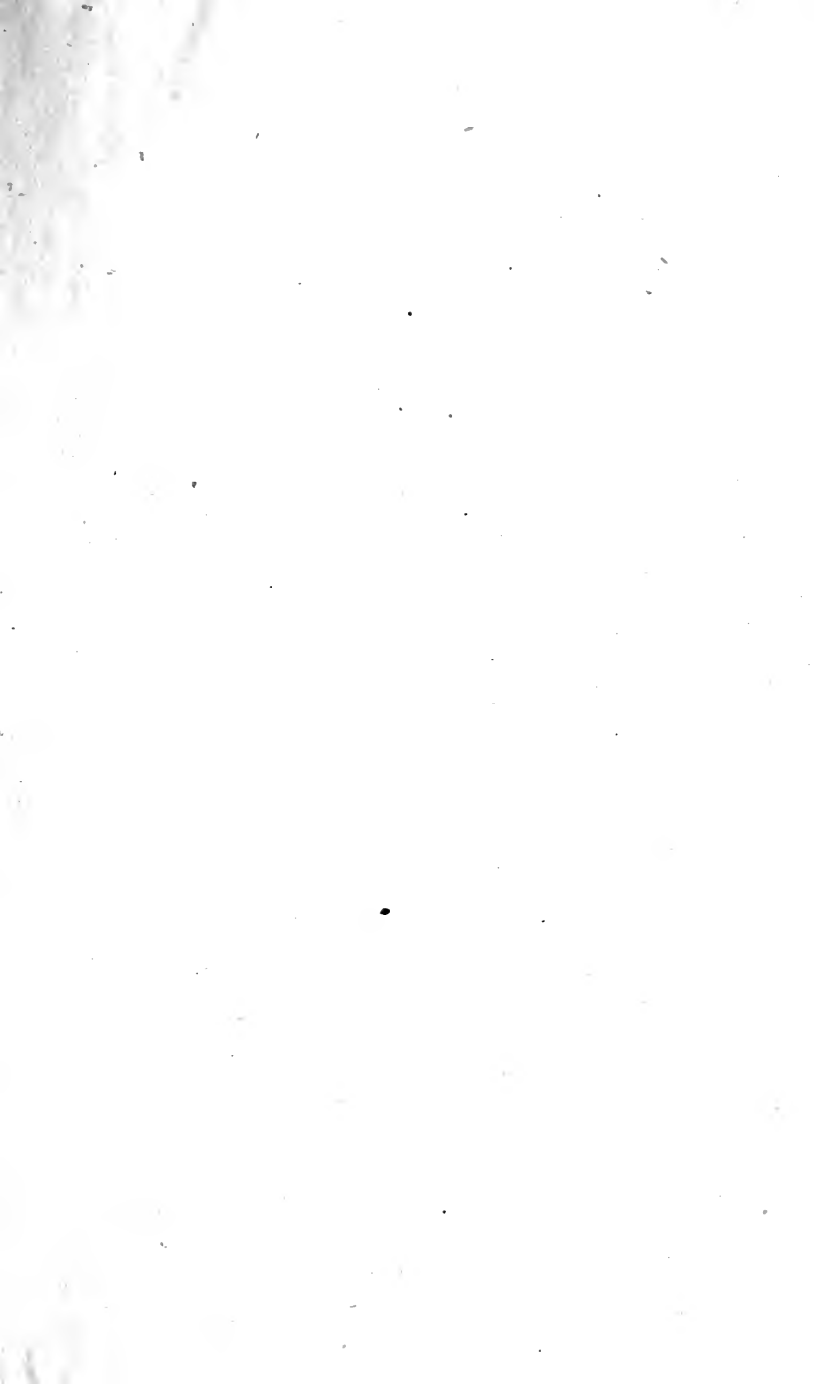
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It seemed as if the mental relief which Lady Courtenay felt from the consummation of her wishes, in having overcome her parents' refusal to her sister's union with Montague, had influence upon her health. The night which succeeded the mimic union of hands which that pale

priestess had so lovingly rehearsed, Julia rested better than she had done for weeks.

The improvement continued ; Lady Courtenay's strength in some degree returned ; and once more the hopes of those around her were raised, for the insidious disease—which, alas ! but sports with its victims—seemed disposed to spare, at least for a time, the life of one so precious and beloved.

END OF VOL. II.



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